The Inimitable Mr Meek: Re-Discovering a Lost Art

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ABSTRACT

James McKain Meek was a Victorian-era graphic artist, miniature calligrapher and colonial eccentric with polymathic interests, who fell into obscurity at the end of the nineteenth century. This research re-discovers, re-presents and re-evaluates his body of graphic art.

A single lithograph by Meek held in the Art Gallery of Ballarat's collection generated the research which uncovered a significant body of work in Australia and overseas. Inspired by this re-discovered oeuvre, an exhibition was curated to mark Meek's bicentenary, returning him to public view. An illustrated companion catalogue, the first scholarly commentary on Meek's oeuvre, presented a series of essays exploring Meek's works and situating them in their Victorian context and within a longer tradition of prints.

The exegesis, the final element of this project, reflects on the research design, addresses curatorial and related issues, and deepens the examination of Meek's output. An analysis of key works informed by Word and Image Studies explores his trademark verbal and visual interplay. Valuable research outcomes discussed include the ongoing conservation of works, contextualisation of material held in collections around the world, Meek's place in the larger narrative of Australian art history, and his legacy.

This tri-partite PhD thesis is comprised of exhibition, catalogue and exegesis: these components are complementary and designed to be considered together. The catalogue addresses an educated lay readership and the exegesis is an overarching academic commentary. The exegesis extends and references the catalogue, and both are grounded in Meek's works, in particular, key works displayed in the exhibition.

This research contends that Meek's work is singular and argues for his re-instatement in the Australian graphic arts canon. His highly individual style and the fact he is local (in his special links with Ballarat and his Trans-Tasman career), make him of particular interest in the Victorian and Australasian contexts.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgment in the main text and bibliography of the thesis.

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Academic research is often a sustained, solitary activity. This project, however, was characterised by a wonderful variety of contacts, locations, activities and output. The range of material involved led to encounters with experts in diverse fields: lithographers and Freemasons, cartographers and genealogists, calligraphers and curators, biographers and arborists. The project entailed adventures in finding lost treasures, curating an exhibition and writing a book, as well as producing an academic commentary. It has been an endeavour of broad sweep as well as focused attention that afforded pure pleasure.

Individual acknowledgements are given in the exhibition catalogue, *The Inimitable Mr Meek*, and I remain indebted and grateful to the many generous people who have given assistance and support.

This work is dedicated to
Penelope Joy Irving (1950–2013)
without whom Ballarat would not have been revealed to me.
I regret that time ran out before we could enjoy it together.

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Exhibition Catalogue *The Inimitable Mr Meek*
Accompanies Exegesis in hardcopy and pdf formats;
also available in hardcopy from the Art Gallery of Ballarat

Hi-resolution images of 8 Meek works
Accompanies Exegesis in jpeg format

Virtual Tour of Exhibition
Accompanies Exegesis as an mp4 file

Exhibition Photographs
Accompanies Exegesis in jpeg format

Website link *The Inimitable Mr Meek*
Available online www.mrmeek.com.au

* The Art Gallery of Ballarat referencing style in the exhibition catalogue, including the use of endnotes, has been continued in the exegesis for consistency.

All references to the exhibition catalogue are to J Luxemburg, *The Inimitable Mr Meek*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2015.

Note: this exegesis is one component of the PhD project; the other two elements are the exhibition and catalogue, *The Inimitable Mr Meek*, produced in June 2015. The three components are complementary and together comprise the PhD.

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Re-Discovering Mr Meek

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1. JM Meek, *Chronological Tree of New Zealand History,* 1876, pen and ink on paper, 225 x 150 cm, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

> … *research* in art history is in pursuit of something it can never catch, but that unknowability is also part of its charm…The observer on the other side of time must struggle to make the objects of the past continue to shine even as he or she dulls them with the rhetoric of analysis. We can never forget that an individual work of art and the historical constellation of which it is a part, like a light radiating from a distant galaxy or merely the sunlight outside the shaded windows of the archive, has come from a time and place that still resonates, and what is past is not necessarily so.
>
> Michael Ann Holly[1]

One very unusual picture, radiating its light from another world and another time, prompted this journey of discovery: a single pen and ink drawing by James McKain Meek, *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree*, lithographed in 1895, a work of dense and complex design with a radical political polemic at its heart. The work posed intriguing questions about the identity of the artist, why he was in Ballarat, what prompted him to make this work, what else he had produced, and whether this distinctive style was typical of his output. As the research unfolded a number of things became clear: Meek's Victorian credentials were evident, much older traditions also informed his works, and yet Meek's body of work appeared to be distinctive. As the size of his oeuvre was revealed and its currency in the nineteenth century became apparent, puzzling questions arose about the reasons for his anonymity since his death in 1899. Mr Meek was an enigma.

In the early stages of the project, only a handful of Meek works were known, and only to a handful of people. In the course of the research, the number of drawings and lithographs grew from six titles locally (*The First House in Ballarat* 1852, *Police Camp Ballarat* 1852, *Atlas of the Australasian Colonies* 1861, *Chronological Tree of Victorian History* 1873, *Past and Present of Ballarat* 1893*,* and *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* 1895), to more than sixty works worldwide. The search spread from Ballarat to wider Victoria, throughout Australia, across the Tasman to New Zealand, to the United Kingdom, and to locations as unexpected as Jamaica. Extant works in Australia and New Zealand were viewed; works held in England, Scotland, the United States of America and Jamaica were located through catalogue listings and/or images.[2] "Great discoveries are made accidentally less often than the populace likes to think",[3] and while it is true that the finding of Meek's oeuvre essentially involved detection, doggedness and dedication, there were some remarkably serendipitous finds. The chance sighting early in the project of

George Grant's copy in oil of *The First House in Ballarat* 1893[4], undergoing conservation work in Victoria's Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, was astonishingly fortuitous and provided a direct point of entry into the Meek-Grant story.

The oeuvre emerged as a substantial collection of material that raised many questions. It was important to map Meek's range of subject matter, to examine his preoccupation with history in the making, to identify his audience, buyers, sponsors and dedicatees and gauge their regard for his works, to evaluate whether the works fitted the times, and to examine their relationship with other contemporary material. Meek produced all his works for general distribution so they relied on the rapid technological advances in printing and transport that occurred in the nineteenth century: how did he respond to those developments? In particular, the lithograph that triggered the research, *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree*, is a decidedly unusual work: whether this was typical or atypical of Meek's work needed to be established. This host of queries coalesced into one overarching research question: What does the work of Victorian-era graphic artist James McKain Meek represent in the context of his time and in the valuing of his legacy and reputation? At this point, the aims of the research were clarified: to re-discover, re-present and re-evaluate Meek's works, and these aims guided the tri-partite structure of the project.

Part 1 of the project, the re-discovery phase, has seen the unearthing of a considerable, varied and fascinating oeuvre that can now be studied and enjoyed. How does one make sense of these objects 'from the other side of time'? Ludmilla Jordanova insists it is approached, first and foremost, by concentrated viewing of the works, "thinking with the eyes."[5] This process allows the works to lead the inquiry, a way of working that Michael Baxandall recommends, approaching each project afresh, with the works as a starting point.[6] While the principal research question entailed a range of matters to investigate, the focus remained on the works, and other lines of enquiry were followed in so far as they illuminated the works.

The research has covered a wide territory, and was necessarily a hybrid undertaking. Art history is a broad church and "is strikingly heterogeneous, using a wide range of ideas, theories and frameworks to explore an equally diverse array of materials … each of which invites approaches that are apt for it."[7] Art history, art criticism and curatorial studies

were the dominant disciplines for the project, but political and sociocultural history and biography were necessarily involved, reflecting the "interdisciplinarity [that] is the order of the day for those interested in the analysis of visual culture."[8] The exploration extended to the social milieu in which Meek worked, historical events he wrote about, and what drove him as an artist and a man. In summary, "the cultural systems informing the production of images, in effect the interrelationship between the artist and his world, are the ultimate determinants of the subject matter of art and its themes."[9]

Understanding the nature and shape of research and where it sits epistemologically is critical to the endeavour. Michael Crotty's reminder that "at every point in our research … we inject a host of assumptions"[10] is germane. An awareness of the presuppositions and foundations of the research, and of the kind of knowledge claims that can be made, is essential to crafting a coherent project and drawing legitimate conclusions from it. In line with most research in the fields of art history, history and biography, the philosophical positioning and conceptual approach of this project are essentially constructionist and interpretive. The theoretical perspective underpinning the research is interpretivist and informed by a hermeneutical attitude.[11] The research approach was to subject Meek's works, together with other relevant materials, to careful, theoretically informed scrutiny.[12]

The project required a range of methods to illuminate the particularity of the work, the medium, the time and place, and the artist. How research is carried out requires scrutiny; the kinds of procedures employed need to fit the approach. In this project qualitative methodologies and methods were appropriate. A process of heuristic inquiry guided the research. Traditional methods of art historical description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation supported a critical understanding and assessment of the works. In looking at the works, elements of semiotics, iconography, and compositional interpretation came into play. Theme and *leitmotif* identification and comparative analysis helped to situate and contextualise them. Word and Image Studies provided a platform for thinking about the marked verbal/visual interplay in the works, and an understanding of text analysis helped in addressing Meek's notably vast number of words. Extending out from the works, historical and biographical approaches were needed to consider time and place, and the artist.

In keeping with the object-led research paradigm, the primary sources were Meek's artworks, essays, poems, letters and diaries. The literature on Meek is comprised largely of Victorian newspaper reports of which there are a large number, and of historical documents and records, which are fewer. These provided key information critical to identifying and locating Meek's oeuvre and establishing its currency in the nineteenth century. Commentary since Meek's death is sparse; there are short articles about him, brief references to him in colonial and family histories, and an entry in *Design & Art Australia Online*. The largest body of information produced prior to this research project was a valuable collection of family history material assembled by descendants. The work of Meek's great-grandsons, Frank and John Dallimore, in putting together a series of newsletters held by the family and circulated to interested parties, *The Journal of the Meek Family History Fellowship*, 1986-2004, provided a welcome starting point for the detective work this kind of research demands.[13]

It was important to see Meek in the context of his times and as the colonial and imperial man he proudly declared himself to be. Seminal texts and recent prolific writing about the Empire addressing 'new imperial history' informed the analysis of his work.[14] Poststructuralism and postcolonialism have influenced contemporary historians to strengthen their focus on issues of power, gender, race and ethnicity, to foreground culture, and to look at the impact of the empire on British and colonial society. Meek's works have been considered through this lens and explored in terms of the ways in which they are reflective and, at the same time, constitutive of the imperial and colonial society in which they arose. Conventional historical methodology and methods including primary document research, source criticism, document analysis and interpretation were used and evidence was triangulated and checked for internal and external consistency by comparing Meek's writings with other published accounts.

While this research was not intended as a life history, these works of art were created by one man and were filtered through his unique experiences and worldview. Recent thinking in historiography has embraced the value of biography and the interconnectedness of the two disciplines. Particularly apposite here is the view that biography gives voice to those who have fallen silent or been overlooked.[15] Fleshing out the character of the man was valuable in deepening the understanding of the works. One of the enigmas in researching Meek was the plethora of public documents, newspaper

articles and reviews, and the dearth of personal material giving insight into the man. Even Meek's diaries are largely factual. This in itself is revealing, but piecing together a biography of Meek involved speculation and interpretation. The poststructural work of Norman Denzin informed considerations of methodology and interpretation.[16] His concerns about a classic, objective approach to biography that renders the subject an object of study were valuable,[17] as were his assertions that "lives and their experiences are represented in stories",[18] and following Bourdieu,[19] that the idea of a continuous, coherent life narrative is deceptive.[20] Some biographical research was also required for George Grant to establish the nature of his interest in Meek's work and whether the two men were in contact.

This project is innovative in design and broad in the range of disciplines that it encompasses. Nevertheless, it is firmly grounded in well-established research principles. The recovery of Meek's oeuvre demonstrated a knowledge gap: this research bridges that gap. The methodology and methods used formed a solid and orthodox qualitative approach for tackling the essential research question. The aims of re-discovering, re-presenting and re-evaluating this body of work were substantially addressed. Meek's words and images remained front and centre of the investigation, in line with Jordanova's understanding that "historical curiosity about who, what, where, why, when and how, remains the driving force."[21] To this I would add: how was the work seen then, how is it seen now, and what is its legacy?

In Part 2 of the project, Meek was re-presented in an exhibition and catalogue that brought him out of obscurity after one hundred and fifteen years and celebrated the anniversary of his two-hundredth birthday. The exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ballarat presented a selection of his works brought together for the first time from around Australia and New Zealand. The accompanying book provided the first comprehensive, publicly available research and commentary on Meek. The *Inimitable Mr Meek* was published by the Gallery, which produces high quality books consistent with the view that "catalogs of comprehensive art historical treasures and individual artists rank among today's most important publications."[22] Part 2 of the exegesis discusses the public face of the research. It reflects on the exhibition, the curatorial decisions that were made, the production of the catalogue, the issues that were encountered, and the nature and extent of

the collaborative processes involved. It also notes some of the immediate outcomes of this phase of the project.

Part 3 of the project, the re-evaluation of Meek, has involved a close and sustained examination of his works, in particular his graphic artwork, an exploration of the milieu in which they were created, and the influences that shaped them. One of the most striking features of Meek's art is the astonishing amount of text he marries with images, motifs and decorative elements, and the way in which his text blocks and highly individual lettering transform into imagery. The field of Word and Image Studies offers a range of ideas that open up interesting possibilities for viewing and reading Meek's graphic artwork and considering his trademark complex interplay of the visual and the verbal. Part 3 of the exegesis introduces the field and discusses its utility for analysing Meek's works, followed by a series of insights into five key works in Meek's oeuvre and a discussion of his recurring use of the tree motif. The analysis of the works entails the exploration of older artistic traditions that they reflect, and the historical context in which Meek made them. His experience as a colonial and his view of empire and nation reverberate in the works; the ways in which these ideas form part of the fabric of Meek's oeuvre are interrogated. The analysis also looks forward and suggests that Meek is surprisingly modern in the word/image fusion he creates to supply information to a mass market.

Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the exegesis mirror the stated aims of the project to re-discover, re-present and re-evaluate Meek's work. The outcomes of the research are presented in Part 4, Re-Instating Mr Meek, which concludes the exegesis with a discussion of the project's achievements and afterlife. It addresses some of the issues that are central to Meek's body of material, such as the conservation and preservation of ageing works on paper, and the value of artworks as historical documents. Contemporary artists and exhibitions that echo aspects of Meek's work and preoccupations are considered. The continuation of the project is important and ways of ensuring this, including a dedicated Meek website, are raised, along with further questions that offer possibilities for future research.

The PhD project is tri-partite in design and the three elements are complementary. This exegesis references the exhibition catalogue, and provides in-depth analysis of key works that were presented in the exhibition and discussed more generally in the catalogue.

Here, rediscovered, is an idiosyncratic and singular body of virtually unknown work that has languished for more than a century. No sustained, formal commentary had been written on it. The material is fascinating in terms of its aesthetics and its links to other periods. It is valuable; it yields further insight into the early years of Ballarat, the colonial period, imperialism as it manifested at the frontier, the rise of nationalism, and the lead up to federation. It also *matters*, adding a rich story and another layer to the evolving narrative of graphic art in Australia.

Introduction

[1] MA Holly, 'What is Research in Art History, Anyway?' in MA Holly and M Smith (eds.), *What is Research in the Visual Arts? Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2008, pp.3-12, quote pp.10-11, italics in original.
[2] See Appendix 1 for full list of Meek works at the time of printing.
[3] WC Dampier-Whetham, *A History of Science and Its Relations with Philosophy and Religion*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1929, p.383, referring to an accident that led to Röntgen's discovery of X-rays.
[4] The connection between Meek and Grant is discussed in the exhibition catalogue, pp.7, 11, 12, and the circumstances of this work in oil, copied from a sketch by Meek, are detailed, pp.54, 56.
[5] LJ Jordanova, 'Thinking with the Eyes', Lecture, *Visual Methodologies Conference*, delivered on 14 September 2011, Day 2, 11.30am plenary session, Berrill Lecture Theatre, The Open University, Walton Hall Campus, Milton Keynes, UK, http://stadium.open.ac.uk/stadia/preview.php?s=1&whichevent=1752, accessed 31 July 2014.
[6] M Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1985.
[7] LJ Jordanova, 'Approaching Visual Materials', in S Gunn and L Faire (eds.), *Research Methods for Histor*y, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012, pp.30-47, quote p.35.
[8] Ibid., p.36.
[9] J Jones-O'Neill, 'Melancholy in Transformation: An Idea and its Representation in Eighteenth-Century Britain', PhD Thesis, School of Arts and Media, Faculty of Humanities, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia, May 2000, p.211.
[10] M Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1998, p.17.
[11] Ibid.
[12] LJ Jordanova, op.cit., p.39.
[13] Summary of sources: primary sources, the works, are prolific, see Appendix 1; contemporary newspaper reports and reviews are numerous, see footnotes; list of newspapers, see Bibliography; historical documents and records, see footnotes; the work of Meek's great-grandsons, Frank and John Dallimore, in producing a series of newsletters held by the family, *The Journal of the Meek Family History Fellowship*, 1986-2004, has been acknowledged in the exhibition catalogue, pp.12, 76 n.2; the online database of Australian design has a brief biography, *Design & Art Australia Online*, https://www.daao.org.au/bio/james-mckain-meek/, accessed 30 April 2013; short articles on Meek, and brief references to him in colonial and family histories, see Bibliography.
[14] For a comprehensive overview of new thinking in imperial history see T Ballantyne, 'The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire and its Historiography', *The Historical Journal*, June 2010, vol.53, no.2, pp.429-452.
[15] S Leckie, 'Biography Matters: Why Historians Need Well-Crafted Biographies More Than Ever', in LE Ambrosius (ed.), *Writing Biography: Historians and their Craft*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 2004, pp.1-26.
[16] NK Denzin and YS Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2000; NK Denzin, *Interpretive Biography*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA, 1989.
[17] NK Denzin, 1989, pp.52-53.
[18] Ibid., p.81.
[19] P Bourdieu, D Saunders (trans.), 'L'Illusion Bibliographique', in *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales,* 1986, no.62-63, pp.69–72.
[20] Ibid., p.61.
[21] LJ Jordanova, op.cit., p.36.
[22] WE Kleinbauer and TP Slavens, *Research Guide to the History of Western Art*, American Library Association, Chicago, 1982, p.40. This comment was prescient given that it is even truer thirty years on than it was at the time it was written.

Figure 2. The moment of discovering *Past and Present of Ballarat*, presentation original, 175 x 150 cm, photograph Gold Museum, Ballarat.

Re-Presenting Mr Meek

CURATORSHIP, EXHIBITION, CATALOGUE

Figure 3. Unpacking loan works for *The Inimitable Mr Meek*, photograph by curator

The Art Gallery of Ballarat had unfinished business with James McKain Meek. The Gallery's decision not to buy *Past and Present of Ballarat* in 1893, Meek's donation of the work in 1895, and its de-acquisition and relocation to a historical collection in the 1930s are aspects of Meek's relationship with the Gallery that were worth revisiting and, indeed, redeeming.[1] This project "spearheaded a concerted effort by the Gallery to revive Meek's reputation"[2] and to reinstate what the present Director regarded as an important part of the Ballarat and Australasian stories, as well as to showcase Meek's fascinating contribution to the history of graphic art more broadly. This section provides the backstory to the development and production of the exhibition and catalogue in association with the Art Gallery of Ballarat.

After twelve months of research re-discovering Meek's works, there was sufficient material to warrant an exhibition, and the date that presented as compelling and achievable was Meek's bicentenary. What could or should such an exhibition achieve?

Within the past decade or so there has been increasing debate about the role of the museum/gallery.[3] The complex issue of its social functions and responsibilities, and the inherent pitfalls in the process of interpreting objects for visitors and providing education, are being teased out. The old assumption that a gallery is the authoritative voice on its collection has been seriously challenged and the role of the visitor in making meaning in the gallery experience is being explored, as is the centrality of the visitor's experience to the life of the gallery. The notion has gained ground of a "holistic spatial experience of the art gallery as interpretive encounter … and the inclusion of multiple interpretive voices including those of visitors."[4] Janes has argued that museums have always evolved over time, "from the elite collections of imperial dominance, to educational institutions for the public, and now to the museum as "mall" and appendage of consumer society … largely devoted to consumption and entertainment."[5] There is no doubt that museums and galleries are under pressure to 'perform'. This is usually assessed by visitor numbers through the door, and by sales of tickets, publications, and merchandise. In such a climate, institutions may struggle to survive. However, the current debate and experimentation by galleries can be seen positively as ways of striving for the next

iteration in their role, relevance, and future.[6] Mounting an exhibition, then, is an increasingly complex activity.

The Art Gallery of Ballarat, like its companion institutions around the world, has had, and continues to have, its own evolution. Galleries change. Decades ago, this gallery was a haven of peace and contemplation, or depending on one's point of view, a dark, silent, menacing place. Now it rings with the sounds of life: music, poetry, gatherings, events, educational activities, tours – it has regenerated in ways that were unimagined in the past. The Gallery has established a reputation for exhibitions that push the boundaries of what can be produced in a regional gallery, and for fine scholarship and high quality publications. It strives to balance the traditional 'hard core' value of museum practice with serving the community[7] – a blend of scholarship, education and "the mall", that is clearly embraced in its mission statement and realised in practice.[8] It also has a brief to focus on Australian and local art. It was in this environment that the Meek exhibition was developed.

It is not only the art museum that is evolving. There is also "the diverse and evolving nature of art curatorship in Australia"[9] and worldwide. Alison Inglis has defined and elaborated the roles of the "artist-curator" and the "scholar-curator", and discussed the increasing professionalisation of curatorship that is reflected in the emergence of university courses in museum and curatorial studies.[10] Traditionally, the curator has been responsible for "the care, display and interpretation of art"[11] in a broad sense, but today the role extends beyond the keepers of collections to independent curators[12] and even celebrity curators.[13] As Fritsch has indicated, the curator's 'voice' is not neutral; "the presentation and communication of objects, and particular narratives associated with them, inevitably entails particular framing of, and indeed interpretation of, art and material culture."[14] The curator speaks of and for the work on display from a position of curatorial authority.[15] Some writers have framed this role as authorship,[16] or theatrical direction[17] and others have described art curators "as brokers, translators, or cultural agents."[18] The task of curating *The Inimitable Mr Meek* was to bring a nineteenth-century artist out of obscurity and present him to a twenty-first-century audience in a very different world with very different sensibilities, and it was important that the curator's stance was one of advocating for the artist.

Before any planning was done, the curator generated a brief, the 'exhibition story', that would direct and focus the show.[19] "Every exhibition is supported by a desire to communicate an idea",[20] and that idea was to return Meek to public attention and showcase his achievements. The statement of the exhibition narrative identified the key elements of the show. There was the historical story: Meek's strong links with Ballarat, his pride in and promotion of the colonies, their progress and achievements, and his demonstration of a national as well as an imperial sensibility. There was the art history story: his use of lithography, his technical prowess in miniature penmanship, his complex graphic design, and the unresolved connection with fellow artist George Grant. There was the important matter of Meek's legacy: bringing the works out of obscurity after one hundred and twenty years, demonstrating the ways in which Meek's works were typically Victorian yet, at the same time, distinctive, and revealing the importance and value of his oeuvre. Finally, there was the story of Meek the man and the times in which he worked: his versatility, his fascination with information, and his Trans-Tasman career. It was clear that storytelling and history would be as important as art in the Meek exhibition.[21]

From the outset, the imagined presence of the visitors was central to the design of the show. Steven Lubar has argued strongly for knowing one's audience, exhorting curators to "get out there on the museum floor. Watch your visitors. Talk to them. See what works and what doesn't."[22] As a Gallery guide, the curator had front line experience of the variety of people who walk into the Gallery, the diverse reasons for which they come, and the varying degrees of art knowledge and interest they bring.

A multitude of influences drive the selection process for an exhibition, factors as diverse as purpose and intuition, space and budget. "You can OD on these works", warned the Gallery Director, Gordon Morrison,[23] as A3 photocopies of Meek's works were laid out and considered. Choosing works that looked appealing or intriguing, and finding variety in a body of work that was remarkably unchanging in half a century, were considerations. As Meek was virtually unknown, it was valuable to show a cross section from all five decades of his career and to include examples of his written output. Also important was highlighting the Ballarat story and the related Meek-Grant connection. But beyond these pragmatic choices, instinct was important; an exhibition needs to create a space that invites viewers in, captures their attention, and provides pleasure and challenge sufficient to engage without overwhelming them.[24] In this regard, the experience and suggestions of

Gallery staff were invaluable. The decision was made to select twenty objects. Given the density of the works, their homogeneity and their monochrome appearance, more than this number would have been difficult to present attractively and may have been overpowering for viewers.[25]

An exhibition is only as good as the loans one can get.[26] Such was the obscurity of Meek before this project that it is fair to say his works had not been seen since they were first accessioned into the collections in which they are held, and that no one, with the possible exception of family historian JT Dallimore, had asked to view them. In some institutions, this caused difficulties; in others, it prompted some interesting reactions.[27]

There are two lithographs of the *Atlas of the Australasian Colonies* 1861 in the collection of the State Library of Victoria, as noted by Meek's descendant Dallimore in the 1980s.[28] In 1990, Dallimore commented that they were "too fragile for handling"[29] and twenty-five years on, the request to view them remained problematic. It took three months for permission to be granted, a special viewing area was required due to the size of the works, and a team of three conservators was involved as the works were deteriorating and literally flaking into pieces (tweezers and plastic bags were in use). It is understandable that further access to these works would be unlikely.

A formal loan request to the University of Melbourne for Meek's *General Map of Australia* 1861 was met with surprise. The lack of precedent for loans of Meek's work meant that the loan situation was a process of negotiation. When the loan agreement arrived, the work had been valued at a low figure that did not reflect current art market value. Although seemingly not regarded as a valuable object, instructions came with the work regarding its handling; it must be displayed flat, not hung, due to its brittle condition (although it was in good order compared to many other Meek works). These unexpected constraints, received when the object arrived at the Gallery, presented some difficulties for the exhibition layout. Display cases take up floor space and can disrupt the coherence of planned wall groupings and visitor flow through the space. The decision was made to place the *Map* in a case beside the *Atlas* where it had been expected to hang. Although the *Map* was angled within the case for easier viewing, light reflecting off the case made it difficult to see the work, and it was not feasible for visitors to use the magnifying glasses provided to read the miniature text and examine the detail. This could have been better

presented had the instructions been received ahead of the work. An angled support for the *Map* without a reflective cover may have offered visitors a clearer view of the work while meeting the loan requirements. However, such issues were inevitable given the fact it was the first time Meek's works had been requested for exhibition.

The key to obtaining the desired loans is undoubtedly engaging managers and curators of collections in the project, and the same holds true for private lenders. It is vital that enthusiasm for the works, their value, the nature of the exhibition for which they are sought, and the contribution these particular works will make to it, are communicated.

The Gold Museum in Ballarat has the largest holding of Meek works in Australia, including his original *Past and Present of Ballarat*, given to the Gallery and inscribed in his hand: "Presented by the author to the Ballarat Fine Art Public Gallery Association April 11 1895." There had been a delay of eighteen months in accessing the larger items in the Gold Museum collection because of a move into a newly built storage facility; there was also difficulty ascertaining the exact location of these items that had come into the collection decades ago. The curator's request for a meeting with Gallery Director and institution Manager/Curator was the crucial element in gaining access. A well prepared meeting, and a well articulated *raison d'être* for the exhibition evoked an enthusiastic response and enabled loans to be achieved that may otherwise not have been made. Between the time of the initial meeting and the formal loan request, the newly appointed Collections Manager expressed concern about the loan of Meek's original work due to its fragile condition. Reference to the earlier discussions, conveying the centrality of the work to the show, agreeing to stringent display conditions, and importantly the support of the manager who was part of the original negotiations, secured a loan that was a vital part of the story connecting Meek, Ballarat, and the Gallery, and that also served to demonstrate the positioning of graphic art historically.

Inevitably, some loan requests were rejected. The National Library of Australia, Canberra, did not loan a printed pamphlet of *Commodore Goodenough's Dying Words* 1875-6, although it is in excellent condition. The curator had viewed the work on site, but because there had been no opportunity for individual contact with a staff person, no personal relationship was made and no occasion to discuss the exhibition and the

importance of the work had arisen; this lack of personal connection may have been a factor in the loan refusal.[30]

Some items, however significant, were beyond the scope of the exhibition, both physically and financially. The original pen and ink drawing of *Chronological Tree of New Zealand History* 1877 is 225 x 150 cm, a one hundred and thirty seven year old work on paper, is held in the collection of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. The cost of a loan of this size was prohibitive, as was the risk inherent in moving a large, old and fragile work between countries. It would also have dominated the exhibition, diminishing the centrality of *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree*, the flagship work that proclaimed Ballarat history as a core motif of the show, and an important feature to attract local visitors. It was decided that the New Zealand work could be included digitally, and an interactive unit was used in the exhibition space where visitors could explore the original pen and ink drawing electronically. This was the first time that the Gallery had used an interactive unit to display a work in an exhibition. The free-standing unit[31] provided an iPad-style tap and drag motion on the screen to enlarge the work and navigate it. Not only did this give excellent access to the miniature script, statistics, photographic insets, and decorative detail in the work, it also provided a familiar, fun and contemporary interface with a typical nineteenth-century work – a novel juxtaposition. The exhibition coincided with school holidays, making the interactive unit a valuable feature in the show, as the theme of Ballarat history and a colourful pioneering character drew school groups. The younger visitors readily manipulated the interactive unit; however, some older patrons were not as agile with the technology and brief instructions on the frame of the unit would have been helpful.

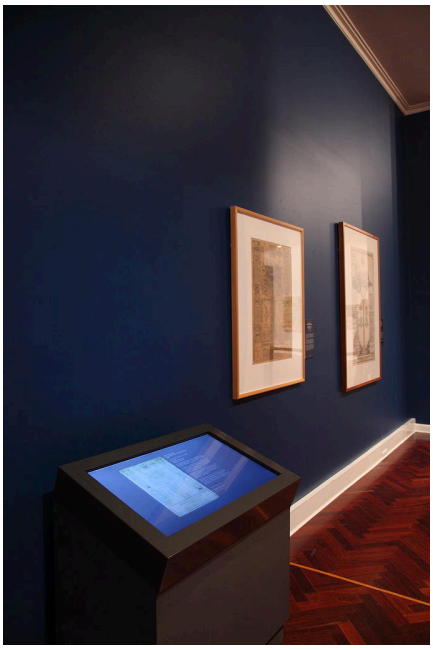


Figure 4. Interactive unit in exhibition space, photograph Art Gallery of Ballarat.

Use of digital surrogates is not without its critics. Taylor has argued strongly that digital reproductions are "flattened reductions" of the original objects that deny the viewer's multi-sensory response to the immediacy of experiencing three-dimensional objects.[32] This view has direct links to Benjamin's 1936 seminal essay on the reproduction of art works in which he postulates that there is a particular quality inherent in an artist's original that is lost in reproduction, to the detriment of the viewer.[33] Taylor's argument seeks to relocate the 'aura' of the original work from within the object to a viewer-centric position. His argument relies on the issue of context. He makes a case for the impact of the museum environment and the presence of others on the experience of viewing an object. He contends that viewing a digital surrogate, an activity that usually occurs outside of the museum environment, mitigates against the all-important affective response of the viewer in the presence of the object and in the museum surrounds. The Meek exhibition, however, provided the full gallery environment as the viewer accessed the digital image. While it is true the reproduced image could not provide an exact view or experience of Meek's original New Zealand work,[34] it is argued that the benefits of the digital surrogate were substantial. Viewers were able to examine the work in exceptional detail and control their exploration, while surrounded by Meek works that provided a powerful context for the digital experience. In this way, far from flattening the viewer's emotional and sensory interplay with the work, the digital surrogate potentially added to

the understanding of, and delight in the work, allowing hands-on 'play' that is impossible with the original.

Other works in the exhibition came in unexpected ways. While experiencing difficulty securing a loan of the *General Map*, the Gallery made inquiries as to whether it could be bought. The *Map* was not available, but another significant work was about to go to auction; the Gallery acquired Meek's award-winning *Atlas*, in superb condition, another serendipitous find for the project.

Nicholas Thomas suggests there is value in "happening upon" things;[35] being open to encountering the unplanned and unexpected allows the curator to respond more dynamically and opens up new possibilities, new ideas, new wonderings, that have the potential to invigorate the project, and this certainly occurred with the arrival of unsolicited Meek works. Donations of material swelled both the exhibition and the Gallery collection.

A Meek family member donated a rich collection of material: *The First House Ballarat* 1893, pen and ink sketch; original diaries 1893-5, 1898-9, that also included an unnamed play; and *Essay on Pensions for Old Age* c.1896. The family was pleased to find an appropriate and safe home at the Gallery for the items that they were concerned were deteriorating and would be lost in a domestic environment.

A tube arrived by post at the Gallery from a private address in Canberra just weeks before the exhibition was due to open. The curator and registration staff opened the package to discover two Meek works donated to the Gallery by a descendant who had heard about the project from another family member: *On Life and Death* c.1880, printed poem, and *The Christian's Keepsake* 1973, a reproduction of the 1893 lithograph.

The response to the donations was to include them in the show, for several reasons. Firstly, it was an opportunity for this new Meek material to be seen (as historical works on paper, they will not be displayed often); secondly, the works complemented those already selected for exhibition and were in good condition; and finally, they were included as a courtesy to the family donors. In particular, the donated material added to the amount of 'original' work on display. Benjamin's view privileging the artist's original

work has been noted[36] and graphic art has been regarded at times as a second-class medium.[37] The issue of reproductions continues to be widely discussed among art historians.[38] Meek's drawings are detailed, elaborate and complete in themselves: they are also an integral part of the lithographic process. The nineteenth-century lithographs on show are 'original', produced at the time Meek engaged the lithographers. Despite this fact, there is no doubt Benjamin's contention is still widely felt, that work in the artist's own hand has a distinctive quality, an authenticity, that is not present in reproductions, a view that underpins Taylor's research, as noted. The human experience of being in the presence of the artist, and in the presence of personal items such as letters and diaries, continues to be deeply affecting and inspirational for researchers and viewers alike. It was one of the reasons for the importance of presenting the original *Past and Present of Ballarat*, drawn by Meek's own hand, the object brought by him into the Gallery building one hundred and twenty-two years ago. As Schoell-Glass has remarked, "the objects in the exhibition … constitute the real presence of the past in the present."[39]

As well as works held by descendants, a lithograph of *Past and Present of Ballarat* held by a member of the public came to light because of publicity for the show. This was valuable in extending the catalogue of extant Meek material. More than this, the exhibition prompted the owner to have conservation work carried out, which is good news for Meek's oeuvre and legacy.

Similarly, the exhibition prompted a search for the *Past and Present of Ballarat* lithograph in an early frame, that had been donated to the City of Ballarat in 1961 by a family whose ancestors had known Meek at Curdies Inlet in the 1850s.[40] The work had been on display in the Town Hall offices as recently as 1982.[41] Extensive correspondence with the City led to the locating of the work, which was in excellent condition, and negotiations took place to transfer it to the Art Gallery of Ballarat collection.

Having assembled a range of works, the significant next step was how to display them, allowing the exhibition brief to guide the process, so that viewers were both fascinated and given a meaningful experience.

Figure 5. Exhibition installation in progress, photograph by curator

The first consideration was the location of the exhibition within the Art Gallery. The choice of the Timken Gallery, a suitably sized ground floor space near reception and immediately visible from the public seating area, meant that many visitors would become aware of the exhibition upon arrival.

The objects in the Meek exhibition were very large and very small. They offered "a striking play of scale (the small and detailed, played-off against the monumental and expansive)."[42] His large graphic works are monochrome: black print and decorative lines on paper that is yellowing with age. They are crowded with micrographic text that is difficult to read. The small objects are also monochrome: pen and ink sketches, printed pamphlets and poems, and handwritten diaries. For conservation reasons, the maximum lighting for these works is 50 lux.[43] The possibility of a room with an air of doom and gloom in which everything looked the same was a real concern.[44]

The wall colour was therefore critical to the display of the works. Most of the gallery spaces are white, but the Timken Gallery walls were Dulux Blue Accolade, a deep blue that provided a rich backdrop against which the works were highlighted. The combination

of the richly coloured walls and the low lighting created an opulent nineteenth-century atmosphere that enhanced the appeal of the material.

Space was also critical in the layout of the Meek exhibition. As Sylvia Lahav has rightly observed, "the art museum is a place of space and spaces; space between the painter and the painting; space between the viewer and the painting; the space in which the painting is located and pictorial space … space is always critical."[45] The space *between* paintings is also significant. The large size of the works, the small size of the text written on them, the sense of personal space that each visitor would bring into the gallery room,[46] all contributed to the decision to provide 'breathing space' around the works. While a more densely packed room would have been reminiscent of authentic nineteenth-century interiors and exhibition hangs, it may also have been claustrophobic and overwhelming for a modern audience.

Meek's signature works are large and the assumption was that visitors needed sufficient space to step well back from each work and view it in its entirety. Meek's forte is his miniature penmanship, so viewers also needed space to move in close and use the magnifying glasses provided so text could be read and other elements in the works explored.

There were no barriers or cording in front of the works. However, display cases are deliberate barriers and five of these were deployed. Two contained the small objects: diaries, letters and printed pamphlets that were vulnerable if handled, and the very fragile original drawing of *Past and Present of Ballarat* also needed protection (and was a condition of the loan). The decision to display *Beauties of Shakspeare* 1882 in a case was an aesthetic one, to allow the large *Christchurch City* 1882 to dominate the visitor's approach to the exhibition space and create impact. The unforeseen requirement for a case to display the *General Map* was more problematic, as noted. (See Figure 6, p.25 for a diagram of the exhibition layout.)

Meek's body of work had never been in one place at one time before. This contrived juxtaposition of works inherently raised issues of interpretation.[47] It was decided to group the works thematically in order to reinforce the exhibition narratives; in this way, works that told a story were seen together even though they may be decades apart

chronologically, and each part of Meek's story could be shown coherently. This decision married a survey approach, spanning Meek's oeuvre and presenting examples across the genres in which he worked, and a constellation approach, grouping material around an idea or theme.[48] "Wherever possible, works should speak to each other, be it in their relationship side-by-side, or how a work might face another across a room; across time and space."[49] The Ballarat works spanning four decades were therefore able to be explored as a single narrative; the *General Map* his award-winning 1861 *Atlas* were positioned together; his genealogical works were assembled as a group; his two chronological history trees were side-by-side for ready comparison; and his New Zealand works were presented together. An evolutionary hang would have split the display of the Ballarat material, and the genealogical works would have repeated in each time period. Importantly, there was no stylistic or thematic change in half a century's work that needed to be demonstrated.[50]

During the past twenty years, research on visitor behaviour and experiences in museums and galleries has been increasing in numbers of studies, focus, and types of research – both qualitative and empirical studies have been done, but fewer empirical.[51] Studies on patterns of visitor movement in galleries and within individual exhibitions have produced varying results and, to date, have yielded no persuasive body of information that might guide curators in the potent act of placing objects in spaces for visitors to experience. Stephen Bitgood, whose ongoing work since the 1980s on visitor behaviour patterns is extensive, has commented that "unfortunately, the consistency of these movement patterns is not readily apparent,[52] and more recently has continued to argue for the complexities involved and the lack of evidence for some accepted behaviours, for example, "a considerable reference to a "right-turn bias" in the literature."[53] A lack of consistent results may not be surprising, considering the relatively recent focus on the visitor, and the inherent difficulties in social science research. Human behaviour is multi-determined by factors that are often out of awareness, difficult to operationalise, and problematic to interpret in any type of study. Moreover, researchers and institutions bring their own perspectives to the studies they undertake, so the results to date are a patchwork of data that reveal no reliable patterns. [54] While it has been strongly argued that "in the museum context … spatial layout is one of the most powerful curatorial tools available",[55] given the research is not providing information on the impact of space on visitors, the curator is working from a mix of intuition, experience and hope. To state that

spatial layout is a *tool* may be crediting (or burdening) the curator with power s/he does not control – a tool is only a tool when one knows how to wield it; otherwise, it is merely a blunt instrument.

TIMKEN GALLERY

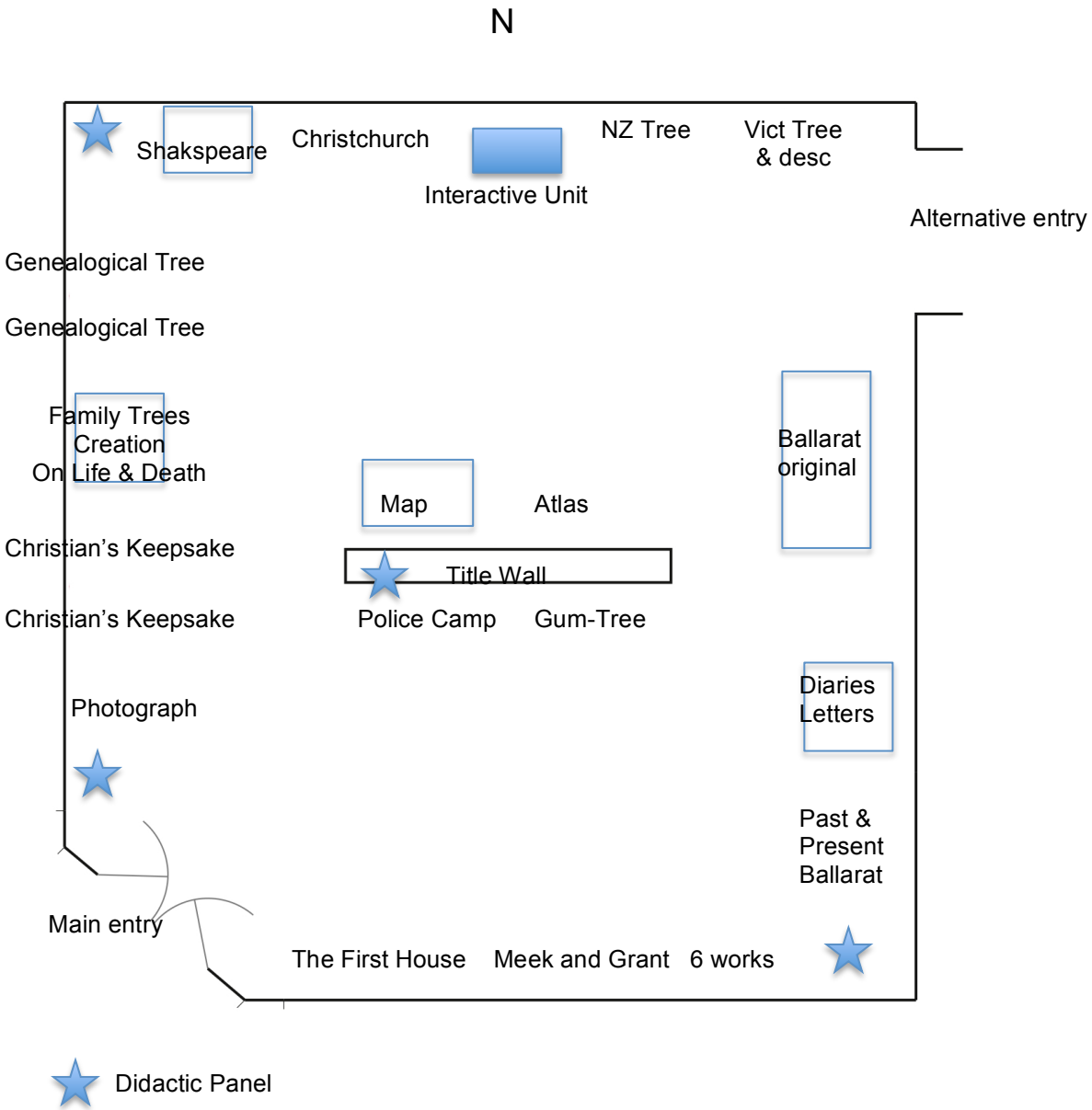


Figure 6. Diagram of exhibition layout

The freestanding title wall, south side, presented the flagship work of the exhibition, *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree*, alongside the *Police Camp Ballarat* sketch. These were pivotal works in the exhibition and an integral pair. The *Police Camp* was drawn by Meek soon after his arrival on the Golden Point goldfield and identifies the camp tree to which miscreants were chained before gaol facilities were built. It is among the earliest sketches depicting the Ballarat landscape and goldfields. The *Gum-Tree* lithograph is Meek's most eccentric work in terms of its text and tells the story of the strained events on the 1850s Ballarat goldfields that were part of the circumstances leading to the Eureka Stockade. Meek delivers a polemic on the unjust and exorbitant gold licence fee and gives the Gum Tree a voice to lament the role it played in such a travesty of justice.[56]

Figure 7. Title wall of exhibition, photograph Art Gallery of Ballarat.

These works are of considerable interest to Ballarat. Local residents are passionate about their history, and the city prides itself on its heritage and the degree to which that heritage is visible today in the landscape and built environment. The works are also politically charged. The Eureka Stockade has been contested since it occurred on 3 December 1854; the exact site of the event is debated, but many current residents in Ballarat East where the diggings were located are proud of the area as a symbol of democracy and the rights of miners over government. Similarly, the Eureka flag remains a potent symbol,[57] and is widely used in the community.[58]

Another political charge was decidedly contemporary. During the course of the research the site of the first police camp became a live issue when the Gold Museum proposed selling a parcel of land that nearby residents argued was the original camp site and should be protected. Meek's *Police Camp* sketch and *Gum-Tree* work have a material bearing on this argument. The topography and layout of the site as drawn in the 1852 sketch are of interest in determining the camp's likely location, and the 1895 *Gum-Tree* lithograph contains two re-drawings of the original camp, one of which names and situates ten surrounding features in the landscape.

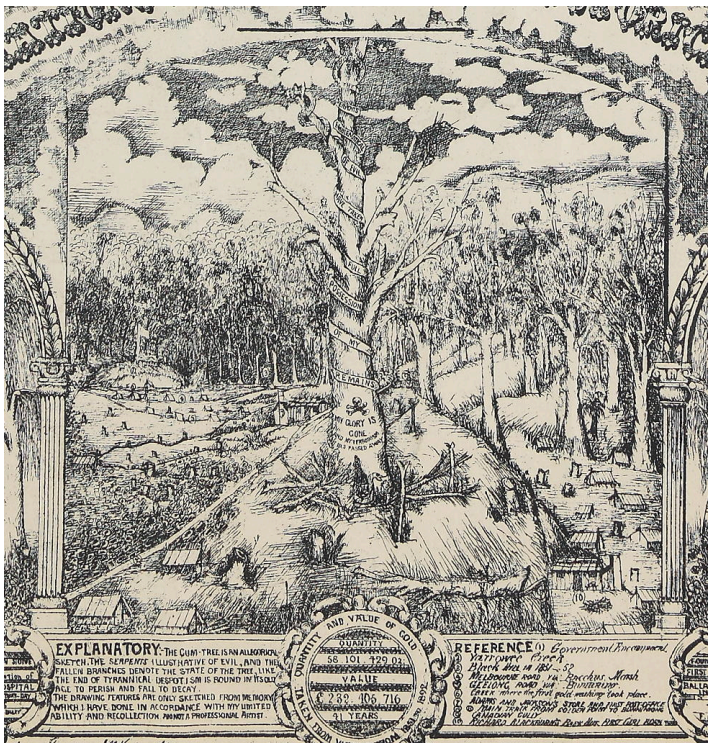


Figure 8. JM Meek, J Curtis, Caxton Printing Works, Ballarat (printer), *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* (detail, proof copy) 1895 photolithograph 61.7 x 48.7 cm, Art Gallery of Ballarat.

Meek's text also gives some pertinent details about the original camp's location.[59] As the exhibition was prepared, the two contesting parties were in court and it was evident the site of the first police camp was a heated local issue. On the one hand, this was a drawcard for the show: the exhibition undeniably illustrated Meek's value as a documenter of history. On the other hand, it was important the text accompanying the works did not derail the main thrust of the show which was to re-present Meek's works and to showcase his Ballarat connections, not to embroil him in a local row, although posthumous controversy would have been quite in keeping with his *modus operandi*.

On the east wall, *Past and Present of Ballarat* was featured. The original pen and ink work, donated by Meek to the Gallery two years after its creation in 1895, was displayed in a case, partially unrolled. A lithograph of the work was hung in its original frame, and Meek's letter of donation and his diary page noting that he had collected a receipt for the work, were displayed in a small case. The *Past and Present of Ballarat* contains a vast amount of information on nineteenth-century Ballarat, its beginnings and its development over forty years. It also reveals Meek's desire to be regarded as 'Founder of the City', both by displaying that title at the bottom of the work and by the inclusion of a number of details that position him as first white resident and builder of the first solid premises on the township. These premises, Ballarat's first house, are described in detail within the work.[60]

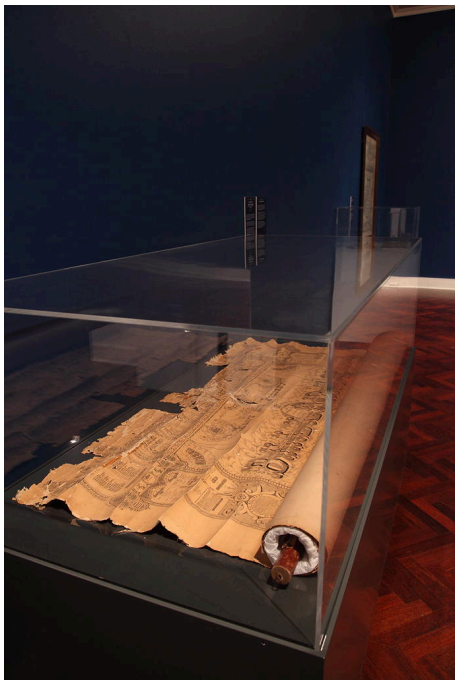


Figure 9. East wall, photograph Art Gallery of Ballarat.

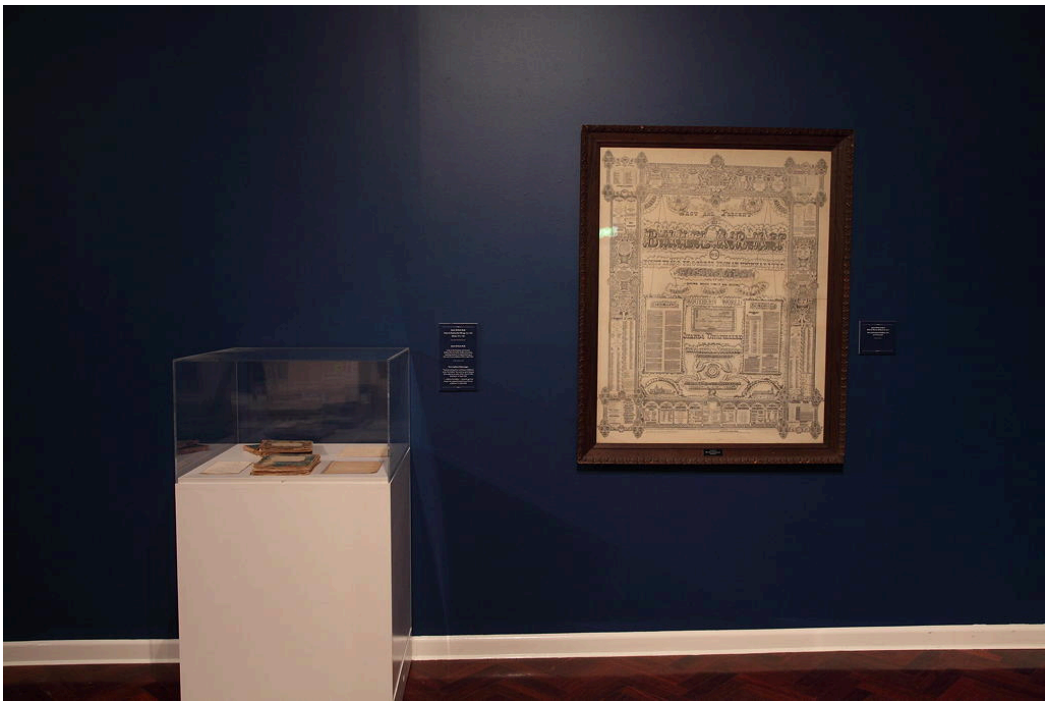


Figure 10. East wall, photograph Art Gallery of Ballarat.

On the south wall, adjacent to *Past and Present of Ballarat*, the story of the first house was told in a chronological arrangement of the original 1852 sketch, two later sketches, and variations that include the artist George Grant's 1893 commissioned oil painting and his over-painted photographs of the same subject. Sight lines between three walls framed the Ballarat story.

Figure 11. South wall, photograph Art Gallery of Ballarat.

Visitors could leave the ‘Ballarat space’ by passing either side of the freestanding title wall, beyond which Meek’s award winning *Atlas* and *Map*, examples of his religious work, and his New Zealand period, were presented.

The reverse (north) side of the freestanding title wall also functioned as a feature wall for visitors who entered the exhibition from the adjacent gallery rather than through the main entrance. The *Atlas of the Australasian Colonies* 1861, newly acquired and freshly conserved by the Gallery, was impressive in size, complexity and condition, and the *General Map of Australia* 1861 was presented alongside in a display case.

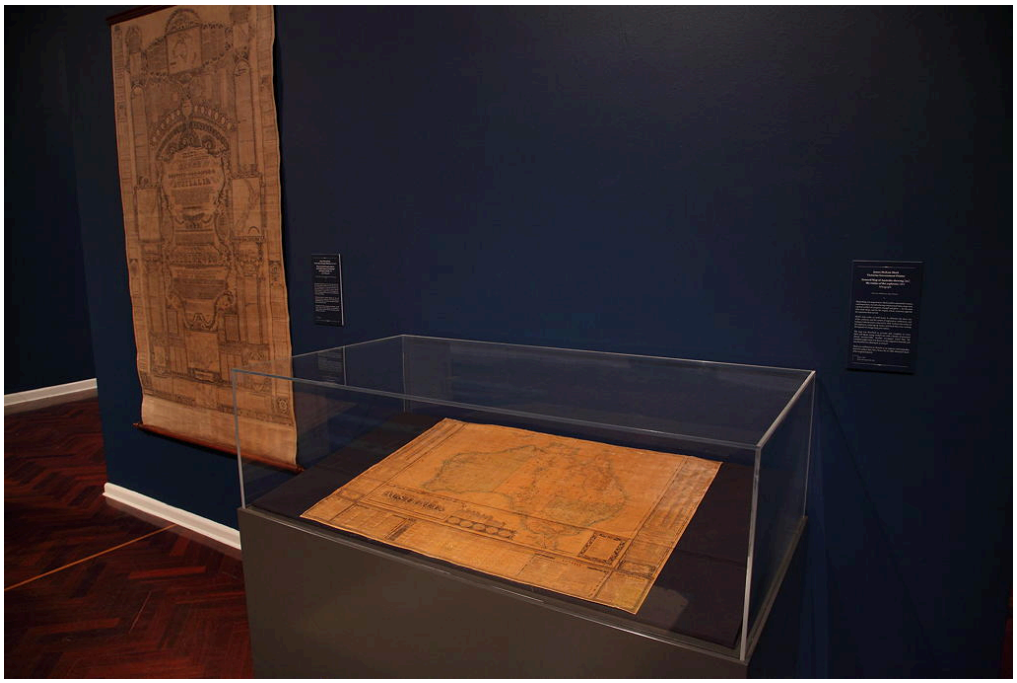


Figure 12. Reverse title wall, photograph Art Gallery of Ballarat.

Opposite the *Atlas* and *Map,* on the north wall, Meek’s two historical trees, *Chronological Tree of Victorian History* and *Chronological Tree of New Zealand History* were paired, being thematically and stylistically linked. Beside the Victorian Tree, Meek’s original diary page was displayed, describing how he designed and drew the work. The New Zealand Tree is Meek’s masterwork, showcasing the height of his competency, and it also introduced viewers to his New Zealand period, 1874-1890. The reasons for, and the value of, the interactive unit providing a hands-on exploration of the original pen and ink drawing of the New Zealand Tree have been noted.

Figure 13. North wall, photograph Art Gallery of Ballarat.

Continuing along the north wall was *Christchurch City*, a large work celebrating the history and achievements of the city and the Canterbury district. This work also functioned as a feature work as it was the single visible focus, in direct line of sight, as visitors approached the main entry doors to the show. The large, pale work had a dramatic presence hanging alone against the rich blue background. This work, exhibited at the Christchurch Exhibition of 1882, continued the representation of Meek's New Zealand material and also allowed an opportunity to present the important role of nineteenth-century exhibitions in promoting and securing Meek's reputation as a graphic artist. This connected to the *Atlas*, diagonally opposite, which had won awards at exhibitions in Melbourne and London. *Beauties of Shakspeare* was displayed in a case to the left of the Christchurch work, continuing the New Zealand grouping and providing an example of a more general interest subject. The reasons for placing this work in a case have been noted.

The west wall, which is on the left as visitors enter the main doors, displayed a photograph of Meek, examples of his religious work and genealogies.

Figure 14. West wall

Two copies of *The Christian's Keepsake*, the 1880 lithograph and a 1973 reproduction of the 1893 version, were hung side-by-side. These looked very similar but in fact presented a 'spot the difference' challenge to viewers. The purpose of presenting two similar but not identical versions of the work was to illustrate Meek's updating and reworking of images over time, to show a more recent interest in Meek (1973), a novel use of his work (it was reproduced and sold as a church fundraiser), and to acknowledge the recent donation of the 1973 work to the Gallery collection. Also on this wall were examples of Meek's genealogies, an example of a commonly used template for recording a family tree, and a more substantial work in its original frame, *Matson Manifold Genealogical Tree of Family History* c.1880, commissioned in New Zealand, and with strong links to a local Western District family. A display case beside the genealogical works showed a book plate displaying the same template used by a different family and reproduced in a published family history. Also on show were printed copies of Meek's poem *On Life and Death* c.1880 and his epic religious poem *The Creation* 1898. Meek's first version of *The Creation* was written in 1874 and was referred to in the extended wall notes for

Chronological Tree of Victorian History. The version of the poem on display was re-written in 1893 and set as a cantata for a recital that Meek hoped would bring financial benefit to the Ballarat Benevolent Asylum, in the same way he had hoped that sales of *Past and Present of Ballarat* would also raise money. The link between *The Creation* and *Past and Present of Ballarat* was made in the extended wall notes.

A clear idea for the exhibition that drives the selection of material and the choreography of the show is fundamental to producing a satisfying and successful event. In addition to the works and the layout, the curator provides texts to help visitors understand that idea. While research on visitor behaviour overall, as noted, has yet to offer strong guidelines, results pertaining to time spent looking at works, and the amount of labelling that visitors read, are more consistent. And these results reveal that viewers read less of the interpretive material provided than curators might hope for.[61] Statistics notwithstanding, New York's Museum of Modern Art believes that "interpretation should be the biggest priority."[62] MoMA has conducted various studies of different exhibitions and spaces. In one study, visitors tolerated about fifty words in object labels, no more than one hundred and fifty in room labels, and three hundred maximum in longer introductory texts. Most visitors spent ten seconds in front of an object — seven to read the label, three to examine the object. In general, forty-five minutes is the attention span within the museum before fatigue sets in. Moreover, the issues and questions on the minds of visitors are often basic:

- "I don't know where to start.
- I don't know what to look at first.
- Have I looked at this long enough?
- What does circa mean?
- Your labels make me feel stupid.
- How did the artist make this?
- Why would a museum put this on display?
- Is this really art?" [63]

In another study at MoMA, one hundred and twelve visitors were tracked. Time spent in the exhibit ranged from two minutes to more than ninety minutes, and averaged fifteen minutes; visitors stopped to look at twenty-five per cent of the works, read at least one

label, and once in front of a work they read the label forty per cent of the time. The reading rates were similar for extended and object labels. Visitors who understood and articulated the main idea of the exhibition stayed longer in the exhibit, looked at more works, and read more labels. The main predictor of who would identify the main theme was prior knowledge about the show.[64]

Museums and galleries worldwide are tackling the issue of interpretation, and re-thinking matters of education and the quality of visitor experience. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London "are trying … to write gallery text that is interesting, engaging and accessible for a wide audience, … to recognise people's needs and interests, and use the devices of good writing to communicate … ideas."[65] The V&A provides freely available guidelines for labels that are comprehensive and practical.[66] Curator Tom Morton suggests that galleries provide wall texts in response to three perceived problems for the viewer: identification, context, and understanding of the work in front of them.[67] But there is debate over why labels are produced and whom they serve. Some writers have addressed "the supremacy of the discursive over the figural"[68] and the dominance of language as it mediates the viewer's contact with art; others have pointed to "a dichotomy between an intellectual understanding of art mediated by words, and a deeper, spiritual experience that comes from a direct encounter",[69] and questioned whether language can describe art at all. Further, the provision of labels is not value-free. The label influences the reading of the picture and, conversely, the picture and its context influences the reading of the label.[70] There is a full spectrum of approaches to text among museums today, from traditional labelling to no labels at all,[71] including the notion that "perhaps only silence and love do justice to a great work of art."[72] The Art Gallery of Ballarat routinely provides interpretive panels and labels[73] and aims to make them accessible to audiences who are increasingly socially and culturally diverse.[74]

Whitehead has researched various institutional approaches to interpreting and exhibiting historical art. [75] The Art Gallery of Toronto has developed a way of working "in which curators are the primary source of ideas for displays and exhibitions but work with interpretive planners, who "contribute to the identification of key messages … as well as works that need interpretive support or extended labels."[76] A similar model operates in the Art Gallery of Ballarat where the Marketing and Public Programs Officer/Editor

collaborates with the curator to communicate ideas to the public to ensure that the needs of visitors are met while the standard of scholarship remains high.

The Meek exhibition was designed to work in layers of visitor engagement. It was intended to be visually satisfying, in terms of atmosphere, appearance, variety of material, impact, space and balance in the room. Thomas asserts that "all good museums should make material accessible at multiple levels"[77] and viewers were offered degrees of information from general contextual material in the didactic panels, to anecdotes about individual works in the extended wall labels, and identification details. The most detailed level of information available was the exhibition catalogue on sale in the Gallery Bookshop.

The Timken Gallery had never had so many words on its walls. This was an exhibition of twenty-eight objects densely packed with miniature text, presented in a single gallery space, in relatively low lighting, with the curator adding even more words. Moreover, labelling is inevitably interventionist: "it never allows a painting to exist in silence with nothing to say."[78] The curator's decision was to have a minimum of didactic panels, four in all, and to keep panels and extended wall notes short and easy to read. This decision was based on several factors: the vast amount of text already in the room, the research indicating how little of the labelling visitors read, and the curator's personal experience of rarely reading in full the panels supplied in exhibitions. Panels were white text on dark blue background, and spotlighted, so the text appeared to glow softly on the walls. Each text was written simply and aimed to provide just enough information to aid understanding and pique interest. The didactic panels and their rationale are appended (Appendix 3).

The extended wall labels were designed to function in a similar way to the breakout texts in the catalogue in that they offered one anecdote or point of interest about each work that would entertain and inform the viewer/reader who may not read any other material. The function of a good label is to catch visitors' attention so they stop and look at the work[79], and even better, look again.[80] The extended wall label texts are appended (Appendix 3).

Object details were provided by the Registration Assistant and were the Gallery's standard format: artist, printer, title, date, medium, lender. The object label was incorporated into the extended label for each item, streamlining the wall display.

Reviewing the panels and extended labels a year after the exhibition, the texts seem too long, despite the best intentions and the sense at the time that they were minimal. The curator's desire to 'show and tell', albeit an admirable one, is perhaps a difficult impulse to rein in. It would be interesting to experiment with more stringent word counts and gauge visitor responses.

It remains a moot point as to whether the curator's intention should be evident in the exhibition. What is certain is that visitors respond individually and idiosyncratically to what they see. That leaves interpretation in something of a bind. However, institutions such as the V&A and MoMA, and most of the major museums worldwide, continue to believe "direct interpretation aids rather than subverts direct experiences of works of art",[81] and continue to "have confidence in their visitors [who] know that there is more to say than a 50-word label."[82]

Exhibitions are ephemeral. Traces remain in catalogues, reviews, photographs, memories. In an attempt to extend these traces in a different medium, the curator has provided a virtual tour of the exhibition, giving a guide to the exhibition narrative, and elaborating the connections among objects on display. (See Virtual Tour, mp4 file.) The tour inevitably adds an element not present in the exhibition per se, the personal investment of the show's creator, and an emotional response to it. "Through the guide's living voice, and its testimony, the connection [to Meek, his work and his times] is added. Word and image combine in a narrative, in which the spoken word has the role to embody the emotions that are released by what is seen and read."[83]

The catalogue was targeted at an educated lay readership, intended for those interested in more depth of knowledge on Meek's work and context, but who were not necessarily experts in art history, lithography or Victorian graphic art. For readers who did have expert knowledge, the Meek material was new. The catalogue was designed to accompany the exhibition and provide supporting material, including a biographical, social and historical context that would enable a deeper understanding of the works on

display. It was also written to be an enjoyable reading experience, with anecdotes and quotes that would bring Meek and his Victorian world to life. However, as WJT Mitchell so aptly wrote, "one never knows what a book is about until it is too late",[84] and more continues to emerge about Meek's work since the exhibition catalogue was released.

The Gallery published *The Inimitable Mr Meek* and therefore its design and editing were a necessarily collaborative process with the in-house designer and editor, to ensure consistency with the house standard and style. This is official Gallery practice for every author, for any catalogue, article, public relations and advertising item it releases under its banner. The collaborative process was also mediated by the requirements of the PhD; in particular, the curator wrote the catalogue and the labels autonomously, and the Gallery editor's role was to offer feedback to ensure the house style and standard were maintained.

The biggest decisions about the catalogue were what to omit, and perhaps the art of writing a good book is to know precisely that. In particular, the focus was primarily on the works, as the book was specifically written to complement the exhibition, and to provide sufficient historical and biographical context to make sense of the body of work on show. The temptation with an interesting and colourful character such as Meek, both for the author and the reader, was to be lured by the personality and the life of the artist: but this is the subject of biography. The challenge was how to incorporate the important human face of the story without compromising the centrality of the works themselves. The catalogue provided a one-page biographical summary, and made a brief statement that biography was not the focus of the book.[85] There were other pressures in the direction of biography and history. Meek's descendants were keen to discover their ancestor's story, and the people and institutions of Ballarat and Victoria would want to assess Meek's considerable body of historical texts within the works. Both of these factors loomed large during the writing of the book.

Meek's story is a busy one, brimful of 'ripping yarns'. The extent of his ventures, adventures and misadventures was considerable during his extremely active life. For this reason, the curator selected five elements that would consolidate the material and spotlight key aspects – his Ballarat works ('Telling Tales of Ballarat'), his New Zealand period ('Travelling Trans-Tasman'), his bread-and-butter lines as an artist ('Surviving the

Times'), his position in the wider graphic art tradition ('Locating a Style: Fit or Misfit?'), and finally the value of his legacy ('Revealing Mr Meek'). This organised and focussed what was potentially a rambling and tangled story.

Choices about the book's size, binding and paper were dictated in part by the budget. The nature and period of the Meek works also impacted those choices, including selection of font, colour and decorative elements. Decisions about book binding and page layout were a balance between the need to keep typeface and pages uncluttered and easy to read, and the desire to reflect some aspects of Meek's high Victorian style without adding to the visual density. A seriph font was selected to echo Meek's traditional style, and for easier reading this was balanced by slightly increased leading. Meek's works are monochrome, so a mid-blue[86] was selected for endpapers, front matter and chapter title pages to lift and enliven what might otherwise have been a dull volume. A restrained decorative element was created for chapter headings and page numbers to echo Meek's use of ornamental lines.

Permission to use images in the publication was undertaken by the Gallery as publisher, as per normal practice. Not all selected images went to print. Some were not supplied in sufficiently high resolution, some were good enough for a smaller reproduction, others did not fit in the final page layout, and one was not readily available so a substitution was made. As with the availability of works for the exhibition, so the vagaries of image reproduction for the catalogue necessitated ongoing adjustments and decisions as the designer advised there were problems to be solved.

The budget for the catalogue was $8,500. The final cost of the catalogue was $12,281.50. The curator researched various grants and funding possibilities, including an offer of funds from one of the institutions loaning works. In discussion with the Gallery Director it was decided in the first instance to approach the Art Gallery of Ballarat Association. The Director reported that the Meek project was enthusiastically received by the Association and the provision of funds was supported unanimously.[87] This was a satisfying outcome that recognised the Gallery's desire to redress its historic response to Meek. The Art Gallery of Ballarat Association provided $4,000, Federation University provided $4,000 and the balance of cost was covered from the Gallery's budget for the project.

Collaboration was a *sine qua non* of the project. In particular, a considerable degree of cooperation between Federation University and the Art Gallery of Ballarat was needed to provide an environment where this project could be shaped, nurtured and realised.[88] Networking, courtesy, cooperation and tact are always required in research, but in this case, the curator was working in concert with the Gallery staff including the Director, Registrar, Exhibitions Officer, and Marketing and Public Programs Officer/Editor, in a busy environment in which major forthcoming events, such as Australia's premier portrait award, the Archibald Prize, were being prepared. This required a high level of consideration for the Gallery staff and environment while, at the same time, balancing the curator's responsibility for the project to come in on time as a quality product, not only for the Gallery but also as part of a PhD research project. The intensely collaborative process involved in producing *The Inimitable Mr Meek* provided an outstanding experience of what it takes to mount an exhibition of historical material and publish an accompanying catalogue in an institution that has a notable reputation for scholarship and high quality, innovative output.[89] Memoranda of Understanding among a number of Ballarat's institutions had been signed shortly before the project evolved, and while collaboration is much discussed, it can be a rare thing in practice.[90] The University of Adelaide and the Art Gallery of South Australia have one of the very few curatorial and museum studies courses in Australia in which there is an integral collaboration between university and gallery, enhanced by the physical proximity of the two institutions. How the Meek project might provide a local model for such desired collaborative partnerships among institutions is worthy of further analysis and development.[91]

21,865 visitors entered the Gallery during the period of the Meek exhibition; staff estimated that a very high percentage of these visitors would have entered the exhibition due to its location near the entrance and reception area.[92] There was media interest in the show: the curator gave five radio interviews[93] and two public lectures, and there was coverage on WIN television. The project fitted well with Ballarat City's focus on heritage and Meek was placed on the register for the naming of a suitable inner city laneway in his memory; a means of recognising the site of the first house is also being pursued. While numbers can be very seductive, particularly for city administrators who allocate funding, among museum professionals "the idea of redefining success in terms of what works for museum visitors"[94] is more compelling. Feedback to the curator was positive, and eavesdropping while visitors were in the show repeatedly revealed they were amazed and

delighted by Meek's accomplishments. For the curator, the raising of Meek's profile, the discovery of further extant material, the donations of work to the Gallery, the conservation work that the project prompted,[95] the provision of a context for works held in other collections, the contribution to Ballarat's rich history, and the value of the project to the Meek family, constitute the real success.

[1] The Gallery's history with Meek is discussed in the exhibition catalogue, J Luxemburg, *The Inimitable Mr Meek*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2015, pp.60, 62, 80 n.16, hereafter referred to as the exhibition catalogue.

[2] Email from G Morrison, Director, Art Gallery of Ballarat to S Fayad, Coordinator Heritage Strategy, City of Ballarat, 17 February 2016.

[3] Discussions of the role of the museum/gallery over time are extensive. See, for example: A Bergeron and B Tuttle, *Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement*, American Alliance of Museums Press, Washington, DC, 2013; RR Janes, 'Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement' (book review), *Curator: The Museum Journal*, July 2014, vol.57, no.3, pp.375-379; S Dudley, 'Materiality Matters: Experiencing the Displayed Object', *UM Working Papers in Museum Studies,* 2012, no.8, pp.1-9; C Whitehead, *Interpreting Art in Museums and Galleries*, Routledge, Oxford and New York, 2012; J Fritsch, (ed.), *Museum Gallery Interpretation and Material Culture*, Routledge, Oxford and New York, 2011; S Dudley (ed.), *Museum Materialities*, Routledge, London and New York, 2010; L Duke, 'The Museum Visit: It's an Experience Not a Lesson', *Curator: The Museum Journal,* 2010,v.53, no.3, pp.271-279; N Thomas, 'The Museum as Method', *Museum Anthropology*, 2010, vol.33, no.1, pp.6-10; C Lang, J Reeve and V Woollard, *The Responsive Museum: Working with Audiences in the Twenty-First Century*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2006; R Sandell (ed.), *Museums, Society, Inequality*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002; E Hooper-Greenhill (ed.), *The Educational Role of the Museum*, 2nd edit., Routledge, London and New York, 1999; T Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge, London, 1995; S Pearce (ed.), *Museums and the Appropriation of Culture*, Athlone, London, 1993; P Bourdieu and A Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, Polity, Cambridge, 1990.

[4] J Fritsch (ed.), op.cit., pp.5-6.

[5] RR Janes, op.cit., p.375.

[6] RR Janes, op.cit.; J Fritsch, op.cit.; C Whitehead, op.cit.

[7] RR Janes, op.cit., p.378.

[8] The Gallery's Mission Statement specifically addresses its commitment to scholarship and community participation. Art Gallery of Ballarat, Strategic Plan 2014-18, http://www.artgalleryofballarat.com.au/about-us/the-board-(1).aspx, accessed 27 May 2016.

[9] A Inglis, 'Art Collections and Art Curatorship: the professionalization of the art curator in Australia', *Museums Australia National Conference,* University of Melbourne, 2010, pp.87-91.

[10] Ibid., p.90.

[11] Ibid., pp.87, 88.

[12] Alison Carroll noted in 1991 that the independent curator was not a viable option in Australia, but the situation has changed considerably in the past twenty years: A Carroll, *Independent Curators: a guide to the employment of independent curators*, Art Museums Association of Australia, Fitzroy, Victoria, 1991; H Mathews, 'Max Delany, on curating', *ABC Arts* interview, posted 26 November 2014 at 10.22am, http://iview.abc.net.au/channel/abcarts/?utm_content=bufferc9dee&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer, retrieved 5 February 2015.

[13] For a discussion of the rise of the 'celebrity curator' see J Rugg and M Sedgwick (eds.), *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, Intellect Ltd, University of Chicago Press, Chicago Illinois, 2007. This trend has also been documented in the press. See for example: S Wolfe, 'If curators are the new celebrities, then where the hell are they?' *artguide Australia*, posted 10 December 2015, http://artguide.com.au/articles-page/show/if-curators-are-the-new-celebrities-then-where-the-hell-are-they/, retrieved 20 May 2016; O Bennett, *Independent*, 'Celebrity Curators: Good for publicity, but what does it say about art?' 1 September 2015, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/celebrity-curators-good-for-publicity-but-what-does-it-say-about-art-10480269.html, retrieved 20 May 2016; E Gamerman, 'Pharrell Williams's Turn as Curator Reflects a Museum Trend', *Wall Street Journal*, 27 October 2014, http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2014/10/27/pharrell-williamss-turn-as-curator-reflects-a-museum-trend/, retrieved 20 May 2016; AG Artner, 'The curator as celebrity', *Chicago Tribune*, June 22 2003, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-06-22/news/0306220360_1_curators-art-dealers-and-collectors-museums, retrieved 20 May 2016.

[14] J Fritsch, op.cit., p.2.

[15] F Vogel, 'Notes on exhibition history in curatorial discourse', *(New) Institution(alism)*, December 2013, no.21, pp.46-54, p.48.

[16] F Vogel, op.cit.; S Lubar, 'Curator as Auteur. Comments on Rabinowitz, "Eavesdropping at the Well", *The Public Historian*, February 2014, vol.36, no.1, pp.71-76.

[17] S Lubar, op.cit.
[18] MC Ramírez, 'Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Representation', in R Greenberg, BW Ferguson and S Nairn (eds.), *Thinking about Exhibitions*, Routledge, London, 1996, pp.21-38; MC Ramírez, 'Constellations: Toward a Radical Questioning of Dominant Curatorial Models', *art journal*, Spring 2000, pp.14-16.
[19] The exhibition story is provided in Appendix 2.
[20] S Ganz Blythe and B Palley, '"Reading the Walls": A Study of Curatorial Expectation and Visitor Perception', in J Fritsch, op.cit., pp.221-233, quote p.231.
[21] R Rabinowitz, 'Eavesdropping at the Well: Interpretive Media in the *Slavery in New York* Exhibit', *The Public Historian*, August 2013, vol.35, no.3, pp.8-45. Rabinowitz argues strongly for objects as stories and for the exhibition as "a priceless avenue for an empathetic connection with the people of the past", p.28.
[22] S Lubar, op.cit., pp.74-75.
[23] Curatorial planning meeting, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 6 March 2014.
[24] R Rabinowitz, op.cit., comments on the theatrical aspect of designing an exhibition and the importance of curator as dramaturge.
[25] This number increased to twenty-eight in the course of preparing the show due to donations of works, see pp.8-9.
[26] Comment by Patricia Tryon Macdonald, co-curator *For Auld Lang Syne*, at a preview of that exhibition for volunteer guides, 10 April 2014.
[27] The Registration Assistant arranged all official loan requests as per normal Gallery procedure.
[28] JT Dallimore (ed.), *The Journal of the Meek Family History Fellowship*, June 1987, no.2, p.12.
[29] JT Dallimore, op.cit., May 1990, no.11, p.98.
[30] However, it is also the case that some institutions have stricter loan policies and other criteria that may have contributed to the rejection of this particular request.
[31] The size of the unit cabinet was (in mm) 800 (H) x 500 (D) x 950 (W) and the screen was 32".
[32] BL Taylor, 'Reconsidering Digital Surrogates. Toward a viewer-oriented model of the gallery experience', in S Dudley, 2010, op.cit., pp.175-184, quote p.177.
[33] W Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', reprinted in J Thomas (ed.), *Reading Images*, New York, Palgrave, 2001, pp.62-75.
[34] The powerful experience of being in the presence of the original work has been described in the exhibition catalogue p.33.
[35] N Thomas, op.cit., p.7.
[36] W Benjamin, op.cit.
[37] The issue of the positioning of graphic art is discussed in the exhibition catalogue pp.60, 62.
[38] For discussions on reproduction in art see for example: R McMullen, *The Aesthetics of Abundance*, Pall Mall Press, London, 1968, especially pp.20-31; A Ellenius, 'Reproducing Art as a Paradigm of Communication. The Case of the Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Magazines', *Figura*, 1984, vol.21, pp.69-92; M Camille, 'Simulacrum', in *Critical Terms for Art History*, RS Nelson and R Shiff (eds.), University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp.31-44; B Latour and A Lowe, 'The Migration of the Aura or how to Explore the Original through its Fac Similes [sic]', in T Bartscherer and R Coover (eds.), *Switching Codes. Thinking Through Digital Technology and the Arts*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011, pp.275-297; C Barker, 'Mechanical Reproduction in an Age of High Art', *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 2014, vol.12, http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=708 permalink: http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.0012.010 [http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.0012.010], retrieved 24 May 2015.
Word and Image theorists are also concerned with issues in art reproduction as evidenced by the subject of the forthcoming 11th International Conference of the Association of Word and Image Studies / Association Internationale pour l¹Etude des Rapports entre Texte et Image (IAWIS/AIERTI), Lausanne, July 10-14, 2017, on Materiality-Immateriality in Reproduction.
[39] C Schoell-Glass, 'The Iconic Turn', in M Heusser, M Hannoosh, E Haskell, L Hoek, D Scott, and P de Voogd (eds.), *On Verbal/Visual Representation,* Word & Image Interactions 4, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2005, p.116.
[40] An item published in the *Warrnambool Standard*, 21 January 1961, p.6, details the donation and provides a lengthy description of the work with a photograph. The frame was noteworthy and thought to have been made from reclaimed timber from the 1880 shipwreck of *Eric the Red*, although this claim has not been substantiated.
[41] Correspondence from IC Smith, Town Clerk, City of Ballarat, to JT Dallimore, 16 August 1982, Ref: ICS:WJD, 483/3/1, confirms that the work was on display in the Town Hall at this date.

[42] M Collings, 'The mad and the good', *Modern Painters*, spring 2002, vol.15, no.1, pp.90-93, quote p.93.
[43] This is museum standard for works on paper; lights are also UV filtered.
[44] It is easy to see Meek's works as lacking colour, a view that harbours hidden assumptions. "Uncoloured, colourless, discoloured: the problem is hidden in these prefixes and suffixes", a perception of "the negation of colourful reality, a lack, a want: reality *minus* colours." There is perhaps an implied criticism in Meek's 'failure to modernise' that includes his failure to use colour although it was available in chromolithography. However, Meek approached his art graphically, he took pride in his dexterity with pen and ink, he took pleasure in rendering lines and marks on paper, and he wrote, as much as he drew, most of his works. It is important to acknowledge his conscious choice of medium as an artist and thereby to consider its quality of difference. C Schoell-Glass, '*En Grisaille* – Painting Difference', in M Heusser, M Hannoosh, L Hoek, C Schoell-Glass and D Scott (eds.), *Text and Visuality,* Word & Image Interactions 3, Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1999, pp.197-204, quote p.200.
[45] S Lahav, 'The Seeing Eye. The Seeing "I"', in J Fritsch, (ed.), op.cit., pp.80-96, quote p.89.
[46] M Merleau-Ponty in particular has written at length about the notion of physical space as a fundamental human element and its centrality in human perception. See for example M Merleau-Ponty and O Davis, *The World of Perception*, Routledge Classics, London, 2004.
[47] N Thomas, op.cit., discusses juxtaposing material and the possibilities of putting "incommensurable things together", p.8.
[48] MC Ramírez, 2000, op.cit.
[49] G Morrison, Director, AGB, private communication with curator, 31 May 2016.
[50] The unchanging style of Meek's graphic art is discussed in the exhibition catalogue pp.71, 75.
[51] V Kirchberg and M Trondle, 'Experiencing Exhibitions: A Review of Studies on Visitor Experiences in Museums', *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 2012, vol.55, no.4, pp.435-452. This article provides a comprehensive review on the research to date and advocates for more empirical studies.
[52] Bitgood has produced a significant body of work on visitor behaviour. For example see 'An Analysis of Visitor Circulation: Movement Patterns and the General Value Principle', *Curator: The Museum Journal,* 2006, vol.49, no.4, pp.463-475, quote p.463.
[53] S Bitgood, 'The Dimensions of Visitor Behaviour in Museums', January 2016, Research Gate, uploaded 6 July 2016, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304944070_The_Dimensions_of_Visitor_Movement_in_Museums , accessed 30 July 2016.
[54] Without the aid of research 'the visitor' remains notional, "imagined, ideal, and hypothetical", a product of the minds of gallery staff, S Glanz Blythe and B Palley, op.cit., p.221. The authors provide a thoughtful discussion of research into visitor behaviour undertaken at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.
[55] J Krukar, 'Walk, Look, Remember: The Influence of the Gallery's Spatial Layout on Human Memory for an Art Exhibition', *Behavioral Sciences*, 2014, vol.4, pp.181-201, quote p.181.
[56] A full discussion of Meek's text in *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* is given in the exhibition catalogue, pp.15-31, and a transcription of the central 'lamentations', p.84.
[57] An example of the intense feeling about the flag was demonstrated in 2013 when it was loaned to the newly opened Museum of Democracy at Eureka (M.A.D.E.) in Ballarat. The move was hotly debated in the local press, to the extent that the actual time and date of the transfer from the Art Gallery where it had been held and displayed for many years was not publicised and the flag was moved discreetly to the new site. For an analysis of the origins and significance of the flag see A Beggs Sunter, 'Birth of a Nation? Constructing and De-Constructing the Eureka Legend', PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 2002.
[58] Visible evidence of local pride in the flag is its frequent appearance. It flies above the Town Hall in Lydiard Street, Trades Hall in Camp Street, and above various shops in the town centre. A small metal flag emblem can be seen beside licence number plates on many local vehicles.
[59] See transcription of Meek's text in the exhibition catalogue p.84, and a full discussion of the location of the original Camp Tree, pp.17, 28, 29.
[60] Meek's claims are analysed in detail in the exhibition catalogue, pp.22-28.
[61] For an interesting discussion of the assumptions embedded in attempts to enhance visitor understanding of art, particularly by increasing time spent in front of works, see C Whitehead, op.cit.
[62] S Bodinson, Director of Interpretation and Research, Museum of Modern Art, New York, quoted in G Gregg, 'Your Labels Make Me Feel Stupid', *ARTnews Ltd*, New York, posted 7 January 2010, http://www.artnews.com/2010/07/01/your-labels-make-me-feel-stupid/, accessed 25 January 2015.
[63] Ibid., n.p.
[64] S Ganz Blythe and B Palley, op.cit., pp.228-230.

[65] Victoria & Albert Museum, http://www.vam.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/177089/10808_file.pdf, accessed 25 January 2015.
[66] Ibid.
[67] T Morton, 'The Wrong Words', *frieze magazine*, 2009, no.124, http://friezenewyork.com/article/wrong-words?language=de, accessed 25 January 2015.
[68] H Lund, 'From Epigraph to Iconic Epigram: The Interaction Between Buildings and Their Inscriptions in the Urban Space', in M Heusser, C Clüver, L Weingarden, and L Hoek (eds.), *The Pictured Word,* Word and Image Interactions 2, Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1998, pp.327-336, quote p.328, noting the work of Norman Bryson and J Hillis Miller.
[69] S Ganz Blythe and B Palley, op.cit., p.221.
[70] As Foucault stressed, an order always hierarchizes the verbal and visual signs, "running from the figure to discourse or from the discourse to the figure." M Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, University of California Press, 1983, p.33.
[71] For a variety of case studies, see, C Whitehead, op.cit.
[72] Dominique de Menil, co-founder of the Menil Collection, Houston, quoted in G Gregg, op.cit., n.p.
[73] Art Gallery of Ballarat word limits are: didactic panel 300; extended wall label 200; object label 30.
[74] G Gregg, op.cit.; Art Gallery of Ballarat Mission Statement, op.cit.
[75] C Whitehead, op.cit.
[76] Ibid., p.112.
[77] N Thomas, op.cit., p.9.
[78] S Lahav, op.cit., p.89.
[79] J Fritsch, op.cit., p.103, referencing a V&A educator.
[80] T Morton, op.cit.
[81] S Ganz Blythe and B Palley, op.cit., p.231.
[82] J Fritsch, op.cit., p.104.
[83] C Schoell-Glass, op.cit., p.116.
[84] WJT Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, University of Chicago Press, London, 2005, p.5.
[85] Exhibition catalogue, p.8.
[86] Colour ID: C=24 M=3 Y=17 K=0.
[87] G Morrison, exhibition catalogue p.7.
[88] See comments by Gallery Director, Foreword, exhibition catalogue, p.7.
[89] The Gallery's exhibitions and accompanying publications in recent years have been widely acclaimed. *For Auld Lang Syne* (2015) catalogue won a national print award during the time *The Inimitable Mr Meek* was in production, and *Capturing Flora* (2012), *Eikon* (2014), and *Kevin Lincoln: The Eye's Mind* (2016) received outstanding reviews.
[90] Private email, G Morrison, Director, AGB, to curator, 16 June 2015; RR Janes, 2014, op.cit., p.378.
[91] Private conversation with Professor John McDonald, Executive Dean, Faculty of Education and Arts, Federation University, 16 June 2015.
[92] Statistics supplied by the Art Gallery of Ballarat.
[93] One of these interviews remains available online at the time of printing: Radio National, *Books and Arts*, interview with Michael Cathcart, 6 July 2015, 10.05am, http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2015/07/bay_20150706.mp3.
[94] D Fischer and L Levinson, 'Redefining Successful Interpretation in Art Museums, *Curator*, 2010, vol.53, no.3, pp.299-323, quote p.299.
[95] Federation University conserved its lithograph of *Past and Present of Ballarat* for display at a public lecture by the curator; discussions were undertaken with the Gold Museum to conserve the original drawing that was displayed in the exhibition; visitors donated funds for conservation of the original drawing via a donation box in the exhibition and these were given to the Gold Museum; the project also prompted two private owners to conserve their lithographs; conservation work was carried out on the *Atlas* bought by the Gallery for the show, and on several donated works.

Figure 15. Conservation work on *Past and Present of Ballarat*, photograph Federation University Australia, Ballarat.

Re-Evaluating Mr Meek

INTRODUCTION: WORD AND IMAGE STUDIES

Figure 16. JM Meek, John Paten, printer, John Noone, photolithographer, *Chronological Tree of Victorian History,* 1873, photolithograph, 114 x 89 cm, Museum Victoria.

As it is with a picture,
So with a poem;
one will attract you more
The nearer you stand, another, the farther away.
One likes the shadow, another will want to be seen
In broad daylight, and has not fear of the critic
With all his shrewd insight. One gives pleasure
But once only; another will always give pleasure,
Though people ask for it back ten times over.

Horace[1]

It could be said that Horace has a lot to answer for. His phrase 'ut pictura poesis', usually rendered 'as is painting, so is poetry', has spawned a veritable and unstoppable academic industry in the comparison of word and image. Horace, however, stands wrongly accused; he is even-handed in his praise of both, pointing out merely that poems and paintings appear to best advantage in different conditions. The real source may be Simonides of Keos who said (according to Plutarch), "Poema pictura loquens, pictura poema silens": 'poetry is a speaking picture, painting a silent poetry'. Another classical author to whom the split is attributed is Plato who, in his dialogue *Cratylus*,[2] debated the issue of whether words are an arbitrary system of signs or whether they have an inherent relation to a referent. Following Plato, Aristotle, the inveterate classifier, weighed the relative importance of speech and spectacle in his theory of tragedy. And the debate has simply never stopped. The place of language and vision in human experience is "an extraordinarily ancient problem in the study of the arts and in theories of rhetoric, communication, and human subjectivity."[3] The word/image phenomenon is at the heart of human experience and has exercised intellect and imagination from the earliest erudition.

The debates on how word and image function in art are particularly relevant to the works of James Meek. This section analyses in depth the relationship of the verbal and the visual, the interplay of word and image, in his works. His oeuvre spans the range of possibilities from entirely written texts to sketches without words, but the majority of his output is a fascinating marriage of the two. In order to fully appreciate the complexity and significance of the word and image interplay in his works, and to understand their position in a constantly shifting terrain, it is important to survey the history of these ideas.

In different periods the word/image relationship has been variously described as harmonious, somewhat reserved or downright antagonistic.
In Western culture the fundamental conceptualisation of word and image is that the two forms of representation arise in different ways.[4] Images derive from the natural world and represent something by a likeness to it. Words have no essential connection to their referent and therefore are represented by signs that are arbitrary and agreed by convention. Although verbal text has a visual representation through letters of the alphabet (that function simultaneously as word, sound and image), text is identified with the word, continuing the visual/textual distinction.

The word/image split has been a foundational assumption of academic writing on art and literature. It has occasioned fierce debate as to their relationship and the relative importance of one or other, and is a core issue in a number of humanistic disciplines including cultural studies, social theory, art history, literary criticism, philosophy, philology, semiotics, paleography, graphic design, psychoanalysis and others. Traditional comparisons and intermittent fashions have privileged word or image at different times in the tradition of the Renaissance *paragone*, weighing the respective abilities and relative importance of the verbal and the visual,[5] although as Michel Foucault theorised, subordination rarely remains stable.[6] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Enlightenment philosopher, dramaturge and art critic, established strict categories for art and literature based on his notion that the verbal was a movement through time and the visual was a static spatial representation.[7] Lessing positioned painting and poetry as "two just and friendly neighbours" who respect each other's boundaries and politely settle any inadvertent trespasses.[8] His contribution to the debate triggered a multitude of binary oppositions that now attach to the verbal/visual one.

Overall, however, *logos*, the word, has traditionally predominated and much of the debate has been an attempt to raise art from a handmaiden status, an attempt that WJT Mitchell has attributed to forces at work in society. "The 'shuttling' of the word/image opposition is … almost invariably connected to larger social and cultural issues."[9] In this view, for example, Leonardo da Vinci's famous defence of painting as a universal language,[10] setting its prominence above poetry, has been seen as part of a wider issue: the pressure by artists at the time to achieve fairer payment.[11]

The seminal essay by Jean Hagstrum in 1958, *The Sister Arts*,[12] examined the relationship between painting, poetry and sculpture from classical antiquity, whence the term 'sister arts' derives, through Renaissance rivalry, to eighteenth-century Britain when more harmonious relations were in vogue and pictorialism came to the fore.[13] Hagstrum's work brought inter-arts comparison to prominence in modern scholarship and it has remained a central theme in literary and art historical thought. As Mitchell concludes, "What is art history, after all, if not an attempt to find the right words to interpret, explain, describe, and evaluate visual images?"[14]

The Romantic period embraced ideals of synthesis and recombination and the nineteenth century was a fertile ground for the entwining of word and image: "it saw an explosion of narrative illustration in popular literature and periodicals, as well as in narrative painting."[15] Julia Thomas posits that there was an interlacing of word and image in Victorian literature and art, particularly apparent in Victorian Britain, which defied the superiority of one over the other.[16] Victorian art and literature "crossed the boundary between text and image"[17] and "displayed a union between 'pen and pencil' that Gerard Curtis has identified as a key feature of mid-nineteenth century culture."[18] It was in this environment that Meek's works were drawn and written, a milieu that is explored in the analyses of key works.

Despite the Victorians' enthusiasm for the verbal/visual nexus, foundationalist assumptions persist in present day arguments and theories. Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic system of classifications rests on the linguistic sign as a 'symbol' that has a conventional relationship to its referent, and the visual sign as an 'icon' that embodies particular formal features of its referent.[19] In the same vein, French post-Saussurean semiology relies on oppositional labels, *arbitraire* versus *motivatée.*[20] The arguments about the function of verbal and visual elements intensify in ekphrasis, a device in which an object in one medium is represented in another, John Keats' *Ode on a Graecian Urn* 1819-20 being a celebrated example in Western literature.

Contemporary debate on word and image covers wide ground. It is pertinent to this commentary as it informs the analyses of Meek's works. Poststructuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida's theory of semiotic analysis, deconstruction, is a critique of the Western philosophical tradition by means of analysing specific texts. He interrogates binary

oppositions that underpin Western thought such as speech/writing, and presence/absence, exposing and subverting them. In his view, visuality and language are independent rather than distinct, although other thinkers claim his linguistics-based model privileges the textual.[21] Some theorists have largely put aside this word/image dichotomy. Martin Heusser puts the case that word and image are inseparable on the grounds that they are in essence the same. "They are both signs, *aliquid pro aliquo, simulacra* – or in the words of Roy Harris: 'mimetic deceptions of the same order'."[22] Will Hill describes the relation as "symbiosis,"[23] while Anne Keefe writes of "the ecstatic embrace of verbal and visual",[24] and other authors such as Julia Thomas continue to argue for their difference, those points at which "one genre simply cannot be translated into another."[25] The notion of a 'pictorial turn' has been proposed by WJT Mitchell, noting a marked movement away from the word and toward the image in the twentieth century,[26] a trend that seems to be growing in a society of ubiquitous, personalised, and portable technological devices with screens whose *raison d'être* is to provide constant access to text, image, text-and-image, or text-as-image.

To look at Meek's pictures, graphic displays, tablets and maps is to be overwhelmed by text, dazzled by design, and mystified as to where words and images begin and end. His work beautifully illustrates the Victorians' delight in verbal/visual fusion. At the same time, it presages the blurring of text and image that is so familiar in twenty-first-century aesthetics, a forerunner of new technologies that mesh words and images and layer text and pictures in the provision of mass information. In a discussion of recent cyber-fiction, Hanjo Berressem notes that the concept of combining images and texts into a more powerful form is a fundamental motif;[27] the same can be said of Meek's work. He could have chosen to write the histories of Ballarat, Victoria and New Zealand and draw scenes of developing cities and bushscapes. Instead, he fused them, creating works of ingenuity and strength.

In the following series of essays, Meek's exuberant mix of word and image is explored. His religious work *The Christian's Keepsake* 1880 and 1893, exploits esoteric iconography, creates visual allegories, and deploys text in, and as, image. Meek draws on the traditional concept of the emblem, an amalgam of word and image designed to form a bridge to fundamental truths and to transport the human mind into otherwise inaccessible regions.[28] Symbols of empire and authority dominate the text and design of *Past and*

Present of Ballarat 1893, a work that both reflects and propagates ideas of empire and nationhood. The Victorians loved a story in their art, and Meek combines images and text to form a stirring political narrative in *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* 1895. Recounting the familiar and controversial story of the Eureka Stockade, Meek anthropomorphised the old gum tree that stood in the original government camp, and the tree declaims a highly charged polemic. The power of names and the act of naming things is demonstrated in Meek's *General Map of Australia* 1861. Combining the visual representation of a newly settled land with the language of ownership, the work exemplifies the power of the mapmaker to legitimate the appropriation of territory. The Victorians valued public art. Meek designed the *Atlas of the Australasian Colonies* 1861 as a monument, fashioned in words and images, that functions to celebrate and reassure the colonial public about the nature of the society they are building and their place in the world. Meek applies his trademark tree motif in a visual conceit that literally shapes the telling of history in the *Chronological Tree of Victorian History* 1873 and its New Zealand counterpart of 1877. Typically his tree images are overlaid with text that in turn becomes a part of the picture, as in *The Christian's Keepsake* in which the bark on the twin trees is rendered by biblical text, and in his history tablet of Victoria on which place names are positioned in the tree foliage drawn in the shape of the State, a distinctive *mise en page* that challenges "the ways in which we view reading and read viewing."[29]

Meek is undoubtedly addicted to information, delighted by data and engrossed in history. It would be easy to suppose that his graphic art tablets are text, set in attractive designs, illustrated by various motifs. This assessment would miss the fullness of his work. Its power lies in the way it functions to embody and express, to reinforce and propagate, important values and preoccupations of the society at the time. Its richness lies in the way Meek's blend of words and images is profoundly Victorian in its aesthetic, in the way it echoes much earlier material, and in the way it foreshadows a very modern verbivisual interface.

[1] CO Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The 'Ars Poetica'*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, 1985, pp.51-72, ll.361-365.
[2] D Sedley, *Plato's 'Cratylus'*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.
[3] WJT Mitchell, 'Word and Image', in RS Nelson and R Shiff (eds.), *Critical Terms for Art History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1996, 2003, pp.51-61, quote p.53.
[4] Not all cultures hold word and image in binary opposition. For an interesting discussion of the closer affinity of word and image in Chinese culture see Mingfei Shi, ''The Three Perfections': Isomorphic Structures in Works of Late Chinese Poet-Calligrapher-Painters', in M Heusser, C Clüver, L Weingarden and L Hoek, *The Pictured Word,* Word and Image Interactions 2, Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1998, pp.257-271.
[5] *Paragone*, 'comparison', is usually associated with Renaissance debate. Note, however, that Farago asserts the term is rarely used in the period and the term was coined in its modern sense in 1817. Moreover, she suggests that "comparison of the arts was not a recognized category of literature until quite recently." C Farago, 'Leonardo da Vinci's Defense of Painting as a Universal Language', M Heusser, M Nänny, PJ de Voogd and HA Lüthy (eds.), *Word & Image Interactions*, 2nd International Conference on Word and Image, Unversität Zürich, 27-31 August 1990, Wiese Verlag, Basel, 1993, pp.125-34, quote p.125.
[6] M Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, Berkeley and London, 1983; H Lund, 'From Epigraph to Iconic Epigram: The Interaction Between Buildings and Their Inscriptions in the Urban Space', in M Heusser, C Clüver, L Weingarden and L Hoek, *The Pictured Word*, 1998, op.cit., p.329.
[7] EG Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, E Frothingham (trans.), Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, (1766), 1965.
[8] Ibid., p.116.
[9] WJT Mitchell, op.cit.,p.59.
[10] Jean Paul Richter (ed.), *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci: Compiled and Edited from the Original Manuscripts*, Dover Publications, New York, 1970; see C Farago, op.cit., for a discussion of the sources of the Leonardo da Vinci material; for an extensive listing of codices see *Universal Leonardo*, http://www.universalleonardo.org/gallery.php?type=408, accessed 1 May 2016.
[11] C Farago, op.cit., p.126.
[12] J Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958, 1987.
[13] R Park, '"Ut pictura poesis": The Nineteenth-Century Aftermath', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Arts Criticism*, 1969, vol.28, no.2, pp.155-164.
[14] WJT Mitchell, op.cit., p.53.
[15] D Trousdale, 'Review of *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image* by Julia Thomas', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 2007, vol.40, no.1, p.82.
[16] J Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image*, Ohio University Press, Ohio, 2004.
[17] Ibid., p.5.
[18] Ibid; G Curtis, *Visual Words: Art and the Material Book in Victorian England*, Ashgate, Aldershot UK, 2002; 'Shared Lines. Pen and Pencil as Trace', in CT Christ and J Jordan (eds.), *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, University of California Press, Berkeley, pp.27-59.
[19] N Houser and C Kloesel (eds.), *The Essential Peirce,* vol.1, and the Peirce Edition Project, vol.2, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1992 and 1998.
[20] See for example R Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, A Lavers and C Smith (trans.), Cape, London, 1967.
[21] J Thomas (ed.), *Reading Images*, Palgrave, Houndsmills, Basingstoke and Hampshire, New York, 2001, pp.5-6.
[22] M Heusser, '"The Ear of the Eye, the Eye of the Ear": On the Relation Between Words and Images', in M Heusser, M Nänny, PJ de Voogd and HA Lüthy (eds.), *Word & Image Interactions,* 1993*,* op.cit., p.13.
[23] W Hill, 'The Digital Scriptorium: Towards a Pre-Gutenberg Perspective on Contemporary Typographic Practice', in M Heusser, M Hannoosh, L Hoek, C Schoell-Glass and D Scott (eds.), *Text and Visuality,* Word & Image Interactions 3, Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1999, pp.229-234.
[24] A Keefe, 'The Ecstatic Embrace of Verbal and Visual: Twenty-First Century Lyric Beyond the Ekphrastic Paragone', *Word & Image*, 2011, vol.27, no.2, pp.135-147.
[25] J Thomas, 2004, op.cit., p.9.

[26] WJT Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1994.

[27] H Berressem, 'One Surface Fits All: Texts, Images and the Topology of Hypermedia, in M Heusser, M Hannoosh, L Hoek, C Schoell-Glass and D Scott, *Text and Visuality,* Word & Image Interactions 3, 1999, op.cit., pp.33-43, quote p.40.

[28] M Heusser, '"The Ear of the Eye, the Eye of the Ear"', in *Word and Image Interactions,* 1993, op.cit., p.15.

[29] E Haskell, 'Fusing Word and Image: The Case of the Cartoon Book, Wilde and Shenton', in M Heusser, L Weingarden and L Hoek (eds.), *The Pictured Word,* 1998, op.cit., pp.245-56, quote p.246.

THE CHRISTIAN'S KEEPSAKE AS DEVOTIONAL OBJECT

Figure 17. JM Meek, unknown printer, *The Christian's Keepsake,* 1880, lithograph, 39 x 35 cm, Auckland Museum, New Zealand

The devotional object is as old as the history of humankind. It portrays a sacred image designed to encourage contemplation, evoke thoughts and feelings, and provoke actions; it reminds, warns, and inspires the viewer/reader, and mediates the relationship with a spiritual realm.

Meek's devotional image, *The Christian's Keepsake* 1880, can be considered from several points of view. It needs to be seen through the lens of Meek's own particular brand of faith: Anglican by rites but possibly nonconformist by inclination. It reflects older Christian traditions of *ars praecandi,*[1] the medieval texts and images that were produced to assist preachers in the art of giving sermons, and *ars memorativa*,[2] the pictorial texts designed to aid memory. The work shares features fundamental to the tradition of religious emblems, allegorical texts and pictures that embodied messages and values for the viewer/reader. It can also be seen in the context of the popular broadsides, one page, single-sided posters, that emerged with the development of printing and were a feature of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century life. The notion of a 'keepsake' was also a familiar one. Keepsakes were often printed in book form in the nineteenth century and titles such as *The Biblical Keepsake* and *The Christian Keepsake and Missionary Annual* presented the reader with an illustrated volume of poetry and prose that "excluded from its pages everything which might be considered of a sectarian character" and offered "some of the more important of those great fundamental truths and doctrines in which all Protestant Christians agree."[3]

Christ is the central figure in this image, floating, emanating rays of light, dressed in a loose winding sheet, hands raised and arms open wide, stigmata visible, although with no crown of thorns, the whole motif enclosed in a mandorla of laurel. The name Jesus dominates in ornate lettering, centred within the mandorla and within the entire image. This is a depiction of the resurrected Christ as confirmed by the text in the open book at the apex of the oval ("Now is Christ risen from the dead"), by the text at the base of the oval (to "save his people from their sins"), and referenced by the word "crucified" within the lines of the inverted triangle at the top of the work.

Inscribed around the figure and blazed on the tree trunks are familiar biblical texts, short passages, phrases and terms that would be well known to Meek's Victorian, Christian audience. He borrows, combines and adapts recognisable motifs, Christian, Masonic[4] and secular, ancient and contemporary: the all-seeing eye (God, the Great Architect of the Universe, Providence), the triangle (the Deity, the Trinity, the sacred number three), the mandorla (Christ in Majesty), its oval shape also suggestive of a heart (love, fidelity, the centre, the underworld), the aureola (the luminous radiance reserved for the figures of God and Mary), the laurel wreath (hopeful expectations, victory), trees (life, abundance, immortality, the Tree of Life, the Tree of Jesse), and the serpent (evil, temptation, the devil, the cycle of nature) – a creative mix of appropriated elements.[5]

The all-seeing eye at the top of the work functions in a number of ways. The Eye of Providence stands as a symbol of divine protection, of God watching over humankind. Conversely, it functions as a reminder and a warning that God is ever-observant, and that one's words and deeds are visible from above. The gaze of the eye also serves to aim the text directly at the viewer/reader: eye/I hold your gaze, eye/I am speaking to *you*. This reflects the "curious reciprocation of the gaze" that occurs in Victorian narrative painting in which the figures look out at the viewer, an "internal and external gaze that renders the figures both seeing and seen."[6] In Meek's work, the eye looks out at the viewers, mirrors them in their act of looking and holds them, integrating them in the image.

Meek's fascination with the eye and the visible was not only an individual preoccupation but also a distinguishing feature of the Victorian period.[7] Popularist writer Joseph Turnley in 1856 produced *The Language of the Eye*: "nature is full of eyes; the past, the present, and the future are full of eyes, and looking over all of these, in turn, is God's kind eye … the externality of sight of the searching One."[8] God's eye in Meek's rendering is indeed largely kind. Hellfire and damnation are reduced to a small section of the lower centre of the work. Directly below Christ's feet, beneath the mandorla-cum-victorious laurel wreath, and confined between the tree roots, two dead, sawn-off branches display misdemeanours and capital sins, from inconstancy and drunkenness to theft and murder; death and eternal punishment are the outcome. A serpent with a forked tongue binds the dead branches, the tips of which resemble flames. But threat is minimal, relegated to a small area of the work that, as a whole, offers more reward than punishment.

The rays of light, the aureola, emanating from the figure of Christ would have held a clear and potent meaning for Meek's viewers. Light was considered integral to God's power: "let there be light",[9] and Ruskin, referring to Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* 1851-53, declared that the light springing from the head of the figure "signifies hope of salvation."[10]

The text invades the image throughout; indeed, text functions as a part of the image, as on the tree trunks where curved lines of calligraphy produce visual texture. Text in this work is written predominantly over the tree images, but the name Jesus is elaborately wrought, bold, and central to the image, referencing God as the Word. The word Jesus was invested with enormous significance. The English Catholic poet Crashaw, in the deeply logocentric milieu of the seventeenth century, celebrated the "Name of Jesus", that "one Rich Word" whose "each Syllable" contains "A Thousand Blest Arabias."[11] Meek exploits the potential of the word through his elaborate font that contains words within words in every letter, a verbivisual hymn of praise. The text within text of Isaiah 9:6 not only takes the reader to the biblical passage, it rings with the unmistakable sound of Handel's *Messiah*: "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, Father, The Prince of Peace."[12] As Tilghman has observed,

> exploiting the iconographic potential of letterforms to expand the meanings of words allowed calligraphers to tap into the rich metaphor of God as the Word, which stands at the core of Christian theology. Just as some have argued that the act of speaking scripture was akin to partaking of the eucharist, these letters turn the visual component of reading into a theophany: to look at the words is to see God, or at least to glimpse his nature.[13]

In this case, it is also to hear it.

Meek's personal spiritual conviction underpins the religious character of *The Christian's Keepsake*, but understanding his religious position requires recourse to historical documents combined with a measure of conjecture. He was baptised in St Nicholas Church, Great Yarmouth, England in 1815. At that time the parish church was divided, literally by brick walls, among three groups: Church of England, Protestant and Puritan, all of whom used the building simultaneously for two hundred years from 1649 until 1859 when the physical divisions were removed.[14] Meek's baptismal rites were recorded as Church of England[15] and, a lifetime later and a world away in Warrnambool, Australia, so were his funeral rites.[16] But the specifics of Meek's personal religious affiliation are less certain. Although the official documents recorded Church of England, these are not

conclusive because individual sects were not registered. Moreover, given the difficult position nonconformists historically occupied, such beliefs may have been held in private, but were not necessarily views a family would wish recorded in the public domain.[17] In 1841 Meek's brother-in-law, John Hollins Craig, and his sister, Meek's wife, were recorded as Protestant on their shipping records to Australia.[18] Craig was one of three men responsible for establishing the Church of England, Christ Church, in Warrnambool in 1850, and in 1878 was nominated by the Reform and Protection League to contest the local seat of parliament "as he was pronounced a liberal in his political opinion."[19] He was buried in the Episcopalian area of the Warrnambool Cemetery in 1884. Meek's daughter, Marianne, had been married in the Anglican cathedral in Melbourne in 1870,[20] and his son-in-law, Peter Dallimore paid for Meek's Anglican funeral.[21] Meek was surrounded by family who were orthodox and his own life was bookended by Anglican rites, but what religious ideas persuaded him between those markers is a matter open to some speculation.

In spite of the story that the official documents might tell, the tone of Meek's religious feeling does not seem entirely orthodox. His valuing of individual conscience, his deep connection with scripture, his sense of the mystery of revelation, his rejection of the walls separating different beliefs, his mistrust of both secular and church authority, and his belief in the Millennium, the Second Coming of Christ, suggest a less mainstream position. Meek reveals much about his stance in his writings. In his poem *On Life and Death*, first published in Auckland c.1874-75, Meek appeals to individual conscience as the guide to right action. "Though difficult to others, pleasing to themselves", "their acts shall be the standard of their souls", and lead to eventual union with God when "their souls will soar into the realms of bliss."[22]

Meek was strongly anti-sectarian. His epic poem *The Creation* is "dedicated to all true and practical Christians of every sect, denomination, country, or creed",[23] and in *On Life and Death*, he propounds a firmly inclusive doctrine.

> If the sectarian world differs from this,
> 'Tis they themselves who cause the evil…
> Because one sect, selfrighteous in themselves,
> Shall tell you, if you don't believe their faith,
> You'll perish in eternal flames.
> They are but men who tell you so,
> Mortals as we are;
> They give the lie direct to God who says
> Mankind are brothers.[24]

He adds a commentary to the poem, leaving the reader in no doubt of his belief.

> The lines I have written on the subject of "Life and Death" I have done so with a conscientious belief that the Great Architect and Grand Master of this habitable globe is not that God of anger nor of vindictiveness that the sectarian world would have its followers believe; but on the contrary, believing Him to be a God of unbounded mercy, not of vindictiveness; a God of love, not of anger; a God of peace, not of war; a God who dispenses His spiritual gifts to whom He wills; He favours not the great and mighty of this world, nor despises the abject form in tattered clothes of poor humanity. Pride and arrogance in His sight are abominations, while humility has centred in the system of mankind the holy attribute of Godly love, no matter where its lot be cast, whether in the trial ordeal of persecution, or in the extreme misery of wretchedness and poverty, they are only acting their part on the stage of the drama of this life; and far greater will be their reward in that life which is to come than those who have dwelt in marble halls and have fared sumptuously here every day.[25]

Millenarian[26] and apocalyptic[27] movements have been noted across cultures and the belief that present society is corrupt and will soon be transformed, eliminating suffering and evil, is a recurring one. The end of a millennium seems to trigger the human imagination, a transition of major significance in which people invest hopes for a better world alongside fears for its destruction. More specifically, a belief in the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of a thousand year Kingdom of God in which evil is banished, Millennialism, is an interpretation of the prophecies in the biblical Book of Revelation.[28] In the Preface to *The Creation*, Meek is unequivocal:

> I have added to the poem a short addendum on the subject in verse, being the promised Millenium [sic] as spoken of by the prophecies recorded in the Bible, in which I am firm believer, and which, I believe, will take place at the close, or before the lapse of the coming century – 1999, hypothetically speaking. [29]

Nineteenth-century Millennialism was a movement in various forms that found traction in the violent social and political upheaval in Europe and in the apocalyptic environment of the French Revolution.[30] Meek's adherence to the Millennium view positions him as heterodox and is consistent with his radical political stance.[31]

There is a touch of 'enthusiasm' about Meek's devotion, not just to do with his eschatological stance, and the emphasis on the personal and individual in his religious writings, but rather suggested by the intensity and fervour of his beliefs. And yet, Meek's embrace of the authority of the Scriptures and his Enlightenment respect for reason mitigate against religious extremism. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that his "theological understanding was planted firmly in a religion of the heart."[32] A subjective orientation, alongside a natural disposition to strongly held views, might be a fairer description of his religious bearing.

The works of Luther during the Reformation were a precursor of Meek's insofar as they harnessed the power of the new printing press to broadcast religious ideas. However, Reformation propaganda had a markedly political intent, whereas *The Christian's Keepsake* is devised in the service of personal devotion, and while its elements may be quirky, its religious motifs are not subversive.

The Christian's Keepsake sits comfortably within the prolific use of broadsides, single-sheet posters and ephemera printed on one side, which were in constant use in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They might advertise the arrival of goods and circuses, or provide public information on anything from politics to public health and crinolines to criminals. They were also an affordable and immensely popular medium for the private consumption of ballads, poems and devotional material such as prayers and sermons. A ubiquitous feature of everyday life, broadsides became increasingly sophisticated as printing technologies developed, allowing text and image to be combined, and as artists exploited their potential for graphic design, illustration and art.[33] A broadside held in the collection of the British Museum entitled *The Tree of Life* c.1825, provides an interesting comparison with *The Christian's Keepsake.* It depicts Christ crucified on a tree bearing fruits identified as virtues,[34] the same motif that Meek has employed in his work, and illustrates the currency of such religious objects at the time.

The Christian's Keepsake may also be considered as part of an earlier tradition that flourished in the Middle Ages, the pictorial *ars praedicandi,* the art of preaching, in which images were designed as a "pictorial script" to aid the preacher's memory.[35] Of particular interest is the interaction between pictorial and homiletic practice in this tradition. Alain de Lille, in his twelfth-century manual on the art of preaching,[36] defined a good sermon as one that would "move the spirits of its hearers, stir up the mind, and encourage repentance."[37] The *Rule of St Francis*,[38] established c.1233, instructed friars to preach "vice and virtue, punishment and glory."[39] The *Etymachia,* an anonymous Latin tract composed c.1322, presented illustrated material for preachers of religious orders, circulated either as part of a compendium or as a separate text during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[40] It depicted the seven deadly sins, with their counterpart virtues, personified, with animals, birds and heraldic elements, and an allegorical text with supporting biblical material. This became enormously popular, judging from the number of extant copies, "as a result no doubt of both the richness and the systematic presentation

of its figural program."[41] This translation of abstract morality into concrete imagery played a significant role in the evolution of popular spirituality. As Norman explains:

> the author of the *Etymachia* apparently set out to provide not only a convenient source book for sermons on the seven deadly sins, but also a way for a popular audience to visualize dry abstractions. His innovation proved so efficacious that his mnemonic *images agentes* grew into a new popular iconography for penitential devotion in the fifteenth century.[42]

The *Etymachia* transformed "verbal metaphor into visual image."[43]

Homiletic elements in art have often been considered from a logocentric perspective, in which the influence moves from the words to the pictures, from the sermon to the image.[44] But a more emancipated verbal/visual relationship has been espoused in which "the preachers coached the public in the painter's repertory, and the painters responded within the current emotional categorisation of the event."[45] *The Christian's Keepsake* clearly displays homiletic elements. In this case, rather than aid the preacher in giving the homily, the work functions as a homily in its own right, one addressed directly to the viewer/reader, in which image and text merge to act as a constant reminder of good and evil, a daily encouragement to embrace, and be embraced by, the risen Christ. And just as medieval preachers constructed their sermons from a wide range of images, texts and ideas, gathered from diverse sources,[46] Meek's work demonstrates the same pragmatic patchwork of borrowed elements.

Religious emblems were first seen in the English tradition in the sixteenth century and remained influential for a further two hundred years.[47] They are symbolic pictures with accompanying text that "communicate moral, political or religious values in ways that have to be decoded by the viewer."[48] *The Christian's Keepsake* echoes the interaction of word and image in these emblems in which, as Gilman describes,

> the relationship between word and image is, potentially, at once metonymic and metaphoric: metonymic in that the two complete each other sequentially and as parts of the whole; metaphoric in that each translates into the other's medium. Ideally, image melts into speech, speech crystallizes into the immediacy of the image.[49]

As noted, emblematic art joins word and image in such a way that the fusion of the two creates a richer and more potent effect than either element offers alone.[50] Emblems derive from the tradition of *ars memorativa* in which the combination of word and picture strengthens the idea being projected, aiding memory. Meek's work is arguably more potent as a devotional object because of that combination. In the same way the marriage of word and image in *ars praecandi* had a mnemonic function for early preachers, the

verbal/visual device in Meek's work secures his message in the nineteenth-century viewer/reader's memory.

Protestant representations of Christ until Holman Hunt's *Light of the World* are relatively uncommon.[51] However, William Blake's images, and his illustrations for well-known authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were in circulation and may have been known to Meek. As Zdanowicz has commented, "it is, of course, impossible to know exactly what the 'ordinary art loving public' in Melbourne knew about Blake but evidence recently collated strongly suggests the educated public in Australia was certainly aware of his literary and artistic work and the growing literature on it."[52] Although Blake's idiosyncratic views were of a more intensely mystical nature than Meek's, both artists came from a similar Anglican milieu. Comparing the two renderings of the resurrected Christ, *The Christian's Keepsake* and Blake's *Night the Fourth: The Christian's Triumph*, Meek's Christ could almost be termed 'Blakean'.[53]

Figure 18. William Blake, *Night the Fourth*, title page: *The Christian Triumph*, illustration in Edward Young, *Night Thoughts* c.1797, etching and line engraving, 41.6 x 32.1 cm, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

The lithographs of *The Christian's Keepsake* were among the smaller of Meek's productions, approximately 40 x 35 cms. These were for private consumption, for contemplation, in contrast to the much larger historical works designed for prominent display.[54] The image offers different levels of engagement. The central drawing of Christ and the prominent name Jesus serves as a reminder as the viewer passes, brief yet constant, repeated with each passing; sustained engagement in reading the miniature text and lingering on the details, becomes a form of worship.

Meek repeated *The Christian's Keepsake* in 1893, with minor differences, and both versions project the same soteriological message, a call to embrace Christ and find salvation.[55] The representation of sin and punishment is equally perfunctory in both; the tone of both images is advice and appeal, rather than admonishment. A fire and brimstone approach was not Meek's way.

The position of the twenty-first-century art historian and commentator on religious art requires some reflection. Critics speak in their *own* time and context, even as they assess religious art in *its* time and context. The development of academic art history and critical methods from the nineteenth century to the present has seen a secularisation of approach, "not only *within* the history of art, but [as] the narrative *of* art history as an academic field."[56] Matters of faith have come increasingly to be regarded as personal, and therefore considered subjective, by a discipline that has embraced a critical/rational, and therefore considered objective, style of discourse. As a result, modernism has often been equated with secularism. Not only has the waning of religious matters in art criticism been regarded as a positive development, there has been a strengthening scepticism in which art history and religion, especially Christianity, are presumed not to belong together.[57] James Romaine and other researchers in the Association of Scholars of Christianity in the History of Art, argue that this contemporary orientation diminishes the experience of looking at Christian art.[58]

These ideas have implications for commentators. "How will art historians responsibly write about works of art with Christian content?"[59] With the current emphasis on context, in which art analysis centres on issues of theory and history, "the meaning of the work of art is not read from the object itself but rather constructed from its social and cultural function."[60] Scholarship needs to start with the artwork … and then endeavor to place it

within its "artistic, cultural and theological contexts."[61]

The Christian's Keepsake is an object that may not be fully grasped by a modern viewer or commentator for whom it is not "at once, [a] visual and religious experience,"[62] and for whom its nature as "sacramental, revelatory and inspirational"[63] has little currency. In commenting on this work, it is important to be mindful of secularist assumptions that may underlie the analysis and endeavour to see the work from Meek's viewpoint. "This means attempting to recover an experience of the work of art as it was meant to be experienced" and to "rediscover ways in which works of art function as sites of sacred encounter."[64] *The Christian's Keepsake* appears quaint and sentimental to twenty-first-century eyes; it may be difficult for a contemporary viewer to appreciate the value this religious object would have had for its owner one hundred and thirty years ago, and how s/he might have used it, and been affected by it. What is clear, however, is the importance of actively engaging Christian visual art, to find a way from a secular response to a more spiritual resonance, and to allow the richness of devotional objects such as this one to manifest.

[1] 'The art of preaching'. "The medieval *artes praecandi* provided instruction in the composition of sermons either as an adjunct to a collection of sermons or as a manual which circulated with other aids for the preacher. The genre received its distinctive form in the 12th century, the first major example being that by Alan of Lille." *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd rev.edn., Oxford University Press, 2006.

[2] 'Memorative art; the art of memory'. Mnemonic principles and techniques have been in use for millennia. The centrality of the visual sense to memory is a key precept. Ancient scholars credit Simonides of Ceos with developing the first theorised approach c.500 BCE. For a scholarly history of the art from the ancients to the Enlightenment see FA Yates, *The Art of Memory*, *Selected Works of Frances Yates*, vol.III, Routledge, London and New York, 1966, 2001.

[3] W Ellis, *The Christian Keepsake, and Missionary Annual*, Brower, Hayes and Co., Philadelphia, 1848, 'Advertisement', n.p. For an example of a Biblical Keepsake see TH Horne, *The Biblical Keepsake: or, landscape illustrations of the most remarkable places mentioned in the Holy Scriptures made from original sketches engraved by W. and E. Finden, with descriptions by the Rev. Thomas Hartwell Horne*, 1836, Royal Collection Trust, https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/1170594/the-biblical-keepsake-or-landscape-illustrations-of-the-most-remarkable-places, accessed 25 April 2017. This volume was presented to Princess Victoria of Kent by Victoria, Duchess of Kent at Claremont, 1 January 1837; keepsakes were popular and highly valued among all classes during the nineteenth century.

[4] No evidence has been found that Meek was a Freemason. He draws on those stylistic elements, but close examination shows that they are not an accurate use of specific Masonic symbols, see exhibition catalogue, pp.33, 47, 75, 78 n.6.

[5] For a comprehensive overview of religions of the world see for example *Encyclopedia of World Religions*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006; *MacMillan Compendium: World Religions*, Macmillan Library Reference, 1997; H Smith, *The World's Religions*, 50th Anniversary Edn., HarperOne, New York, 1991; J Bowker, *World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored & Explained*, DK Publishing, New York, 2006; WM Johnston, *Recent Reference Books in Religion: A Guide for Students, Scholars, Researchers, Buyers & Readers*, Routledge, London and New York, 2013. The Tree of Life and the Tree of Jesse are considered in detail in The Tree Motif essay, pp.110-111, and pp.112-113 respectively.

[6] J Thomas, *Victorian Narrative Painting*, Tate Publishing, London, 2000, p.122.

[7] K Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2000.

[8] Quoted in K Flint, op.cit., p.26.

[9] K Flint, op.cit., pp.73, 75; E Sherratt, *A Popular Treatise on the Origin, Nature and Properties of Light: Shewing the Wisdom, Goodness and Great Designing Hand of the Beneficent Creator*, Simpkin, Marshall and Co., London, 1856, p.II.

[10] J Ruskin, 'The Light of the World', letter first published in *The Times*, 5 May 1854, in ET Cook and A Wedderburn (eds.), *The Works of John Ruskin*, George Allen, London and Longmans, Green & Co., New York, 1903-1912, vol.XII, pp.329-330; K Flint, op.cit.

[11] Quoted in EB Gilman, 'Word and Image in Quarles' "Emblemes"', *Critical Inquiry*, Spring, 1980, vol.6, no.3 pp.385-410, quote p.390.

[12] Within the word 'Jesus' Meek inserted part of the Chorus sung in GF Handel's oratorio *Messiah*, HWV 56, scene 3.

[13] BC Tilghman, 'The Shape of The Word: Extralinguistic Meaning in Insular Display Lettering', *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, 2011, vol.27, no.3, pp.292-308, pub online 17 October 2011, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02666286.2011.541129, accessed 21 September 2015.

[14] PP Davies, *The Priory and Parish Church of St Nicholas, Great Yarmouth: A Historical Guide*, Paul P Davies, Great Yarmouth, 2004; Great Yarmouth Minster, http://www.gtyarmouthminster.org/visitor-information/brief-history.html, accessed 29 January 2016.

[15] United Kingdom, Norfolk, Great Yarmouth Minster, Baptisms Solemnized in the Parish of Great Yarmouth in the County of Norfolk in the Year 1815, July 3, No.1602, *Meeke* [sic], *James McKain Archibald Job*, Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, England.

[16] Victoria, Warrnambool, Beattie and Phillips, Funeral Directors, 1899, order for funeral arrangements, *James McKain Meek*, 9 June 1899, no.10, "Denomination Ch of England", Warrnambool & District Historical Society collection (copy).

[17] United Kingdom, Norfolk, Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, B Kilduff, Searchroom/Research Assistant, private email to author, 2 February 2016: "In terms of denomination, these registers are the Church of England registers of baptism and they will not specify any other denomination, e.g. Puritan. If the baptism

took place and is recorded in the Church of England registers then we can only assume that this is their denomination, however, I realise it is perhaps not as simple as that because there are divisions and factions within the established church itself. Also, in fear of persecution, individuals would be baptised within a certain denomination even though their belief system may have differed. Unfortunately, the register will of course not record this and we hold no other records which would give such information."

[18] New South Wales Government, The State Archives Collection, Western Sydney Records Centre, Kingswood, NSW, Index of Ships, 'Frances', Port Phillip, 28 November 1841, *Craig John*, reel 2144 [4/4814], p.114, online, http://srwww.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.asp?Page=NRS5316/4_4814/Frances_28%20Nov%201841/4_481400112.jpg&No=4 , accessed 23 March 2015.
Ibid, *Craig, Julia*, p.115.

[19] John Hollins Craig, b.1817, Manchester, England, d.1884, Warrnambool, Australia. Meek married Julia Anne Craig, John's sister. Craig was an educated, enterprising man, regarded as one of the founders of Warrnambool, who built the first hotel there. He was a prominent citizen in the bustling coastal town and held various responsible positions throughout his life. He was well regarded, and a generous benefactor. Craig Street in Warrnambool is named in his memory. For a biography of the Craig family see JT Dallimore (ed.), *Journal of the Meek Family History Fellowship*, September 1987, no.3, pp.19-26, quote p.19.

[20] Australia, Marriage Index 1788-1950, 1843, *Marriage of Marianne Elizabeth Meek and Peter Dallimore*, Victoria, VC, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed 23 March 2015. JT Dallimore records that the marriage took place in St James Anglican Cathedral, Melbourne, in *The Journal of the Meek Family History Fellowship,* November 1986, no.1, p.5.

[21] Victoria, Warrnambool, Beattie and Phillips, Funeral Directors, 1899, funeral account, *Peter Dallimore*, for the late James McKain Meek, 11 June 1899, no.101a, £7.0.0, Warrnambool & District Historical Society collection (copy).

[22] JM Meek, *On Life and Death*, Field, Printer, Albert St, Auckland, n.d., [c.1874-75], final page.

[23] JM Meek, *The Creation*, AT Mason, Printer, Brunswick St, Fitzroy, 1874; and *The Creation: An Epic Poem, to which is added an Addendum in Verse, The Millenium* [sic]. *The two together being suitable for recital or cantata*, James Curtis, Printer, Ballarat, 1898, dedication page.

[24] JM Meek, *Commodore Goodenough's Dying Words with an Addendum On Life and Death and Other Original Poems*, Thos. Smith, Printer, Warrnambool, c.1875-76, p.17. State Library of Victoria, http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/176558.

[25] Ibid., p.19. It is interesting that William Blake shared this view; a comparison has been drawn between Meek and Blake regarding the fervour and sustained individual vision and vocabulary that both artists displayed, see the exhibition catalogue, pp.71, 81 n.54.

[26] Millenarianism occurs in many cultures and the Millennium is a specific form of this apocalyptic belief; see C Wessinger (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, Oxford University Press, 2011 for a range of views on the subject.

[27] For an overview of apocalyptic movements see for example: JR Hall, *Apocalypse: From Antiquity to the Empire of Modernity,* Polity, Cambridge, UK, 2009; T Robbins, and SJ Palmer (eds.), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements,* Routledge, New York, 1997; CB Strozier, and M Flynn (eds.), *The Year 2000: Essays on the End,* New York University Press, New York, 1997; S O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1994; N Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993.

[28] It refers specifically to the New Testament Book of Revelation, 20:1-7.

[29] JM Meek, *The Creation*…, 1898, op.cit., Preface, n.p.

[30] M Fitzpatrick, 'Heretical Religion and Radical Political Ideas in Late Eighteenth-Century England', in H Eckhart (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture. England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, The German Historical Institute London, Oxford University Press, 1990, pp.339-372.

[31] The issue of Meek's radical political stance is discussed in the exhibition catalogue, 'Telling Tales of Ballarat', especially pp.29-30, and his connection with George Grant, a radical unionist, p.56.

[32] This description, applied to Wesley, seems apt for Meek, in LO Ferrell, 'John Wesley and the Enthusiasts', *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 1988, vol.23, nos.1&2, pp.180-187, quote p.185. See also M Lodahl, 'Wesleyan Reservations about Eschatological "Enthusiasm"', *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 1994, vol.29, nos.1&*2*, pp.50-63.

[33] For an overview of broadsides in the nineteenth century see R Richardson, 'Street Literature', in *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*, British Library online, n.d., https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/street-literature#, accessed 25 April 2017.

[34] J Catnach, publisher, *The Tree of Life*, c.1825, print [broadside], 49.0 x 35.2 cm, British Museum.
[35] V Plesch, 'Pictorial *Ars Praecandi* in Late Fifteenth-Century Paintings', in M Heusser, M Hannoosh, L Hoek, C Schoell-Glass and D Scott (eds.), *Text and Visuality,* Word & Image Interactions 3, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 1999, pp.173-186, quote p.183.
[36] French theologian and poet, c.1128-c.1202. One of his most popular and widely distributed works was his manual on preaching, *Ars Praedicandi*, or *The Art of Preaching*. Alan of Lille, *The Art of Preaching,* GR Evans (trans.), Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo MI, 1981.
[37] Quoted in V Plesch, op.cit., p.176.
[38] The Rule of St Francis c.1233 instituted the way of life of Franciscan monks, notably one of poverty, chastity and obedience and close adherence to the gospels of Christ. See for example JRH Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968; OJ Thatcher and E H McNeal (eds. trans.), *A Source Book for Medieval History*, Scribner's, New York, 1905, pp.499-507.
[39] Quoted in V Plesch, op.cit., p.178.
[40] N Harris, *The Latin and German 'Etymachia': Textual History, Edition, Commentary,* Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1994.
[41] AE Wright, Review of N Harris, *op.cit., The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, April 2000, vol.99, no.2, pp.299-301, quote p.299.
[42] JS Norman, 'Text and Image in Medieval Sermons', in M Heusser, M Nänny, PJ de Voogd and HA Lüthy (eds.), *Word & Image Interactions*, 2nd International Conference on Word and Image, Unversität Zürich, August 27-31, 1990, Wiese Verlag, Basel, 1993, pp.41-47, quote p.46.
[43] Ibid., p.41.
[44] V Plesch, op.cit., discusses art historical scholarship regarding the homiletic content of paintings.
[45] M Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 2nd edn., Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1988, p.55, quoted in V Plesch, op.cit., p.173. Plesch also references the work of L Randall and A Nova on this subject.
[46] "essentiellement des montages de pièces rapportées", H Martin, *Le Métier de Prédicateur à la Fin du Moyen Âge* (1350-1520), Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1988, p.243, quoted in V Plesch, op.cit., p.183.
[47] R Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1948.
[48] Glasgow University Emblem website, http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk , accessed 20 September 2015.
[49] EB Gilman, op.cit., p.389.
[50] Ibid, p.387.
[51] J Maas, *Holman Hunt and the Light of the World*, Ashgate, Aldershot, UK, 1984; C Forbes, 'Images of Christ in Nineteenth-Century British Paintings in the Forbes Magazine Collection', *Magazine Antiques*, December 2001, pp.794-803.
[52] I Zdanowicz, 'Introduction: The Melbourne Blakes – Their Acquisition and Critical Fortunes in Australia', in M Butlin and T Gott (eds.), *William Blake in the Collection of National Gallery of Victoria,* NGV, Melbourne, 1989, pp.10-19, quote p.14.
[53] Bindman, D, assisted by D Toomey, *The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1978; Keynes, G (ed.), *Blake: Complete Writings*, Random House, London and New York, 1957.
[54] Bernard Smith has discussed how the taste for 'Evangelism' was not popular in Australian art in terms of paintings and yet every respectable house "could boast not only a Bible and a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*" but also poems, articles from magazines, and ephemera of a religious bent that people collected enthusiastically; it is this audience that Meek was addressing. B Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study of Australian Art since 1788,* 2nd edn., Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1979, pp. 104-108.
[55] The differences from the earlier image are a more detailed rendering of the Christ figure, the figure is fully clothed, and Christ is portrayed without stigmata. Overall, the typography is simpler in the later work, the text on the tree boles, for example, is sans serif, and there are a few minor spelling variants.
[56] J Romaine, 'Expanding the Discourse on Christianity in the History of Art', in J Romaine and L Stratford (eds.), *ReVisioning: Critical Methods of Seeing Christianity in the History of Art,* Cascade Books, Eugene, OR, 2013, pp.3-24, quote p.5, referencing a range of art history textbooks. Italics in original.
[57] Ibid., pp.5-6.
[58] Ibid., p.8.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., p.14.
[61] Ibid., p.16.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., p.18.
[64] Ibid., p.23.

PAST AND PRESENT OF BALLARAT: CREATING EMPIRE AND NATION

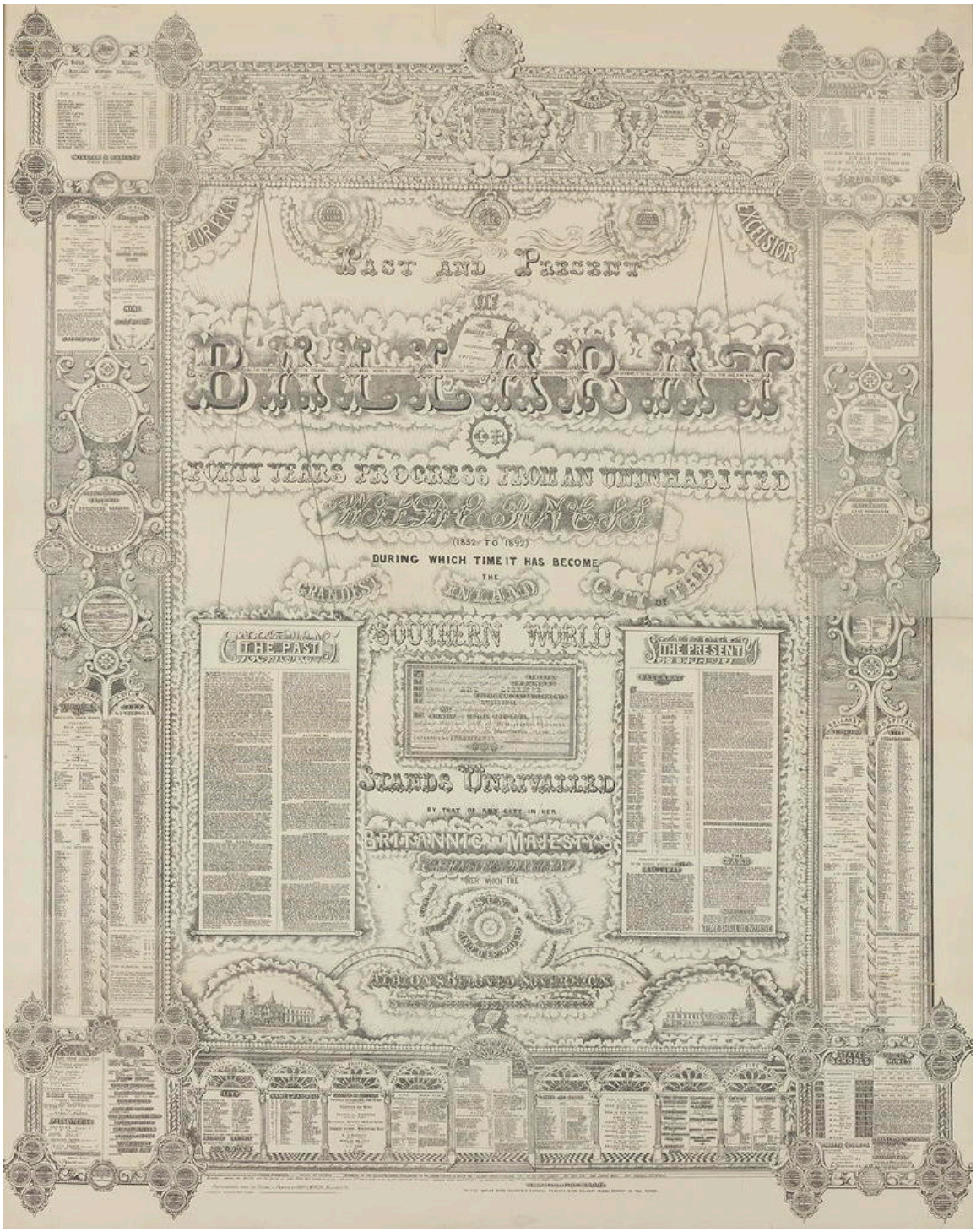


Figure 19. JM Meek, Rider & Mercer, printer, *Past and Present of Ballarat,* 1893, photolithograph, 120.5 x 95 cm, Gold Museum, Ballarat.

Empire follows Art and not vice versa as Englishmen suppose.

William Blake[1]

Past and Present of Ballarat 1893 is a colonial and imperial extravaganza. It embodies unmistakable notions of progress and empire, fundamental aspects of nineteenth-century society and culture that are hallmarks of the period. This essay explores the role of art in the imperial endeavour. It examines not only how art reflected imperial society but, more interestingly, art's role in creating empire, and how audiences and critics were entailed in this process. Further, Meek's work is considered within a contemporary body of art and literature that developed a view of colonial society as distinct and valid in its own right, this sense of difference constituting an identity out of which nationalism was born.

The British Empire rose to greatness in the nineteenth century. It became the largest empire in history and the greatest world power, a position it maintained for more than a century. It was "a conglomeration of widely scattered territories, a political *tour de force* which required enormous sustained resources of material and ingenuity to keep going."[2] It was not only economics and politics that kept the giant engine of empire turning; without a firm *belief* in this far-reaching crusade of progress, achievement, indeed of enlightenment, it could not have succeeded in the spectacular way it did. It required winning the hearts and minds of the British people, those 'at home' and those who went out into the empire to do its work. It was not only immensely profitable, it was important that it was seen as 'right'.[3]

'New imperial history' recognises the pivotal role of culture in the business of empire building.[4] Art and literature were significant means by which the affirmation of progress and empire occurred. During the mid-nineteenth century a notion of culture emerged that encompassed a way of life.[5] In this view art and society converged, and aesthetic, moral and social judgements overlapped; "art was seen to evolve from society and in turn, society was judged and characterised by its art."[6] Themes of empire and progress were elevated to privileged subjects. In short, the view developed that "a nation's art ought … to be a mirror to a nation's greatness."[7] Not for the first time in history, art was essentially

patriotic. Of course, not all artists and critics were persuaded. Counter views were put that art was apolitical, separate from the social world, with its own inherent qualities;[8] art for art's sake was espoused and some proclaimed the need to detach art from nationalism. However, there is no doubt that for a good deal of the second half of the nineteenth century, the taste for nationalist and imperialist art prevailed. Art that mirrored the Empire's greatness, and art that expressed a nation's distinctiveness, were both central to Meek's work.

Past and Present of Ballarat is nothing less than a lavish panegyric to the young city. Producing the work forty-two years after his first arrival on the goldfields, Meek was in a first-hand position to witness and chronicle the city's astonishingly sudden birth and its equally startling growth to a place of wealth and prominence in the colonies. The importance of the colonies to Britain and the interest in them by Britons cannot be overestimated. The fantastic amount of wealth, initially in the sheer quantity of gold that flowed to Britain, created a gold fever not only in the colonies themselves, but also in the imaginations of those 'at home'. William Westgarth, recalling his early days in Melbourne and Victoria, after a visit to the city "concluded that £10,000 a day was being taken out of Ballarat." In Victoria "the yield of 1852 was estimated at no less than fifteen millions."[9] Beyond the dazzling numbers was the compelling fantasy of a life of adventure in which anyone could become rich overnight. These notions fuelled the British public's appetite for news, stories and pictures of the miracle unfolding on the other side of the world, an appetite that was fed by publications such as the *Illustrated London News* and supported by technologies that would revolutionise printing during the nineteenth century.[10]

To see *Past and Present of Ballarat* is immediately to recognise a nineteenth-century work and an imperial message. One of its most striking features is the architectural vocabulary of its ornamentation, in particular, its columns and borders. These are strongly reminiscent of Westminster Palace, the seat of government of the Empire in London, newly built between 1840 and 1870. Meek's decorative features are strikingly similar to the Victoria Tower and the Clock Tower housing the iconic Big Ben, the sound of which would ring out across the empire on radio in the twentieth century as a symbol of power and cohesion. It is an imperialist visual statement *par excellence*.

Past and Present of Ballarat and other Meek works such as his history trees, the *Atlas of the British Colonies* 1861, and the *General Map of Australia* 1861 depict and describe the colonies and their white history as the *definitive* story, and present them in their imperial trappings as part of the *British* story. This does not so much describe the empire, as create the empire at the frontier. Meek's works generate the grand narrative as much as they reflect it. As Thomas has noted,

> art is one of the signifying practices of a culture, and there is a sense in which it is constitutive rather than reflective, actually constructing ideas of what "Englishness" [nation and empire] is.[11]

The process of creation is a discursive one in which the viewer plays an intrinsic part. Works attain their effects as much by virtue of the implied cultural position of the viewer as by their own iconography. As Michel Pêcheux has noted, "words, expressions, propositions, etc. change their meaning according to the positions held by those who use them."[12] Meek's work requires the spectator to work on the image – s/he is not a passive recipient. Viewing the image is not a neutral act – the viewer actively generates meaning.[13] The meaning of Meek's work, beyond the pomp and statistics, is a narrative of Britishness, imperialism and colonialism, a meaning brought to the work by the understanding of those who were looking at it.

The art critics of the day also played their part in this constructing of a world-view. Art writing occurs in and of its time and is one of the discourses that define a period.[14] Meek's critics were often the provincial press who had no specialist art knowledge. Ruskin's advice to such reviewers was to look carefully and restrict their remarks to the content.[15] In effect, their writing acted to confirm the viewer's perception of the works and was not designed to challenge or extend understanding. Meek's artistry was described in glowing terms; critics and audiences gave overt support to the works as narratives and objects that were striking in their accomplishment and that would promote the position of the colonies 'at home'. The Ballarat *Star* reviewed it enthusiastically:

> The work conveys by words and pictorial representations a complete history of Ballarat from its inception up to the 17th March inst. The various pillars and scrolls by which the many incidents that are related are surrounded are marvellously executed, the plain and ornamental lettering is exquisite; while the language used in the narrative is of the most eloquent and refined description. Sketches…[are]…equal to any photographic picture. The work…is worthy of a position in any public library or private residence.[16]

While the more progressive and professional art critics of the day such as Fry, Rossetti, Whistler and Pater decried the amateur approach to art reviews, mainstream Victorian art criticism, written by writers for the general press, continued to describe immensely popular narrative works in terms that were more suitable for fictional prose.[17] Flint explains that these generalist reviews

> [were] not intended to startle the reader into any new understanding or way of seeing, but [were] used to confirm [viewers'] membership of the social grouping to which they belonged, or to which they aspired to belong. Possession of shared knowledge, and shared opinion, was considered far more important than the activation of the individual eye.[18]

In this way, a shared view of the world was constructed from the position of the spectators, both viewers and critics, and was maintained by the reciprocity of the relationship between them.

There is another big story, front and centre, in *Past and Present of Ballarat*, the story of the emergence of a new nation. Colonial art not only helped create empire, it also fostered the rise of nationalism. As Benedict Anderson has argued, there is an "incompatibility of empire and nation";[19] the process of creating empire contains within it its own subversion. The colonial narrative becomes so compelling that the viewer/reader is persuaded that not only is the empire real and good, but that this place in which s/he stands is also real and good; moreover, it is distinct, it is different. This growing feeling of difference constitutes national identity.[20] The link between art and empire, narrative and nation "is not simply a metaphor but a real cultural and linguistic process that produces nation as a signifier and marks it with the workings of difference."[21]

There were other forces at play that also fostered nationalism. The great exhibitions that were such a feature of nineteenth-century life were not only celebrations of global reach, they stimulated national identity both in their conception and layout.[22] The products and achievements of each individual nation were showcased in dedicated national pavilions and were inevitably compared. Reviews of the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1855, for example, went a long way to promoting the idea of a distinctly English national style of art, "a genre anectodical",[23] a notion that was adopted and developed over succeeding years by English critics and press.[24] In this view, proposed by the French critics, English art reflected the English character, "fiercely independent, proud and worthy of their imperial domination."[25]

The development of national identity can be seen in many colonial environments.[26] Martin Heusser has contended that landscape is a construct and has examined American colonial landscape images, tracing the way in which various strands of Western discourse are woven in the service of cultural (and political) appropriation[27] and how these colonial images are suffused with elements of encroachment and covert imperialism.[28] The artist's act of making the work and the viewer's act of looking at it are ways of bringing the landscape under control, of inevitably imbuing it with the maker's/viewer's sensibilities; as they appropriate the landscape they indeed possess it. Here white colonials create their right to reside.[29]

This domesticating of foreign landscapes, a process also seen in the great exhibitions in which the exotic was tamed and brought home, "transformed [them] from a very far distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar."[30] Meek's focus was not on the sweeping landscape but rather his interest was in the civilised, built environment and what that represented. *Past and Present of Ballarat* acts to transform a hitherto unknown, potentially dangerous new place into an object of fascination. Meek presents the viewer/reader with images and details of a place that was once 'wild', now characterised by order and balance; it is not only contained and controlled, but improved, even civilised. His small, detailed drawings of the impressive, newly built Benevolent Asylum and Post Office in *Past and Present of Ballarat*, create an unassailable picture of betterment and progress, and a society that viewers could recognise.

In *Past and Present of Ballarat*, Meek positions himself variously as authority, chronicler, and advocate for the city. The photolithograph is large, 120.5 x 95 cm, densely worked, and imposing. The architectural elements are in-filled with miniature text in which Meek presents a formidable amount of data about Ballarat and its institutions, from education and law to welfare and arts, and those who administer them. His data read like scientific facts.[31] Two large hanging panels proclaim 'The Past' and 'The Present', within which Meek writes in miniature the history of the city and describes its position, layout, manufacturing, and amenities. He writes lyrically, in a personal style and often in the first person, about the city's beauty and stability, and his opinion of the character of its inhabitants. His approach is encyclopaedic, providing vast amounts of statistics, it is stamped with emblems of authority, and it is personal, offering an eyewitness account.

The work presents a verifiable reality.[32] In this way the colony (and indeed the empire), is exteriorised/represented "both as an existential and a moral fact."[33]

But Meek does more than present information;[34] the manner in which he does so articulates the grand narrative of progress in the colonies. He advocates for the colony, presenting it to the colonists' themselves, as well as to the 'home country', as not only worthy, but vibrant, capable and successful – indeed, astonishing in its achievements. The subtext of this work says and illustrates that the colonies are no less worthy than the source from which they have sprung, and here the stirrings of nationalism can be seen.

Meek's work is political; it is pro-empire: "o'er which Albion's beloved sovereign sways her benign sceptre",[35] and nationalistic: "Ballarat stands unrivalled by that of any city in her Britannic Majesty's extensive domain."[36] Ballarat was renowned for this birth of a society. The sudden influx on the goldfields of so many men and women, from all classes and nations, provided the ingredients for a situation that was transformative. It created an intense social experiment that gave rise to a new and distinct identity.[37] This evolving identity can be seen in *Past and Present of Ballarat* as it proclaims to the home countries, to the empire, and importantly to the settlers themselves, that this new place is not only a miracle of development, it is civilised. For those colonials who arrived as convicts and found their place in this new world, Meek's works bore an implicit message of emancipation and respectability.

During the 1880s historicism emerged in Australia, an understanding that the country had a significant white history, and this is evident in the art of the period. In 1886, Eugene von Guérard's painting of Ballarat in the goldfield days[38] was sent to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London to hang alongside James Meadows' view of contemporary Ballarat[39] – the city then and now. The vision of the city's growth in just thirty years was spectacular. Samuel Huyghue's watercolour of the Eureka uprising (*Eureka Stockade* 1882), regarded as an important historical document, was donated to the Art Gallery of Ballarat in 1891.[40] There is a sense of a distinct place and culture, well established, with a proud history of its own. Meek's works were performing a similar function to the oil paintings of von Guérard, Louis Buvelot, and Nicholas Chevalier. These pedigreed painters from the other side of the world tackled the Australian landscape, albeit with

European eyes, and presented it to the colonials themselves, as well as to a spellbound audience in Britain. These artists were fundamental to creating the vision of a new land.

The popular artist ST Gill[41] might seem to be a closer comparison with Meek than eminent landscape painters. Gill was contemporary with Meek on the goldfields and around the colonies, and his drawings, watercolours and prints were well known and enjoyed by his audiences and reviewers. Interestingly, however, not only does Gill's relaxed liveliness and colour differentiate his work from Meek's, Gill's irony and humour reveal a subversive element, a complex commentary that encompasses the Aboriginal presence in society and often satirises the pomposity of new settlers in possession of even newer wealth. This is entirely different from Meek's position; there is no trace of irony or humour in Meek's grand view.

Art historical theory over the past twenty-five years in particular has proposed a view of art as not only reflective of society but also constitutive of it. *Past and Present of Ballarat* has been examined in the light of this proposition and a case has been made that Meek's work played an important role, along with that of other contemporary artists, in the felt presence of empire at its remotest outposts, and in the evolution of a distinctive Australian colonial society. This role goes some way in explaining the currency that his work enjoyed in the latter half of the nineteenth century,[42] as reader/viewers saw themselves, their cities and their achievements powerfully drawn in grand style and meticulous detail. Within such a context the taste for Meek's works can be better understood, locating them not only in a monumental story of expansion and empire but also in the colonists' own story of emancipation and nation building.

[1] W Blake, contradicting Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Blake: Complete Writings*, G Keynes (ed.), Random House, London and New York, 1957.
[2] P Kennedy, 1987, quoted in G Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century. Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times*, Verso, London and New York, 1996, p.57.
[3] The importance of the public's positive engagement with empire in the nineteenth century can be seen by contrast with the early twentieth century, particularly post-World War I, when imperialism as a sophisticated idea was relevant only to the elite. The public's lack of ideological commitment and indifference meant that empire was not an election issue and decolonisation occurred without national distress, unlike in France. See J MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, UK, 1984, p.1.
[4] T Ballantyne, 'The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire and its Historiography', *The Historical Journal*, June 2010, vol.53, no.2, pp.429-452; PH Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001; and D Kennedy, 'The Imperial History Wars' *Journal of British Studies*, January 2015, vol.54, no.1, pp.5-22 provides a further update from an American perspective.
[5] J Thomas, referencing R Williams, in *Victorian Narrative Painting*, Tate Publishing, London, 2000, p.107.
[6] Ibid.
[7] JB Atkinson, 'The Royal Academy and Other Exhibitions' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, July 1860, no.88, p.65, quoted in J Thomas, 2000, op.cit., pp.107-108.
[8] Roger Fry and James Whistler are discussed in J Thomas, 2000, op.cit., pp.108-109.
[9] W Westgarth, *Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne and Victoria*, George Robertson & Company, Melbourne and Sydney, 1888, facsimile edn., Rippleside Press, Geelong, 1970, pp.136-137, [8], 178.
[10] PA Dowling, 'Chronicles of Progress. The Illustrated Newspapers of Colonial Australia, 1853-1896', PhD Thesis, Monash University, Faculty of Arts, 1997.
[11] J Thomas, 2000, op.cit., p.106.
[12] M Pêcheux, quoted in M Heusser, 'Cultural Appropriation and National Identity. The Landscapes of Albert Bierstadt and James Fenimore Cooper', in M Heusser, M Hanoosh, E Haskell, L Hoek, D Scott, and P de Voogd, *On Verbal/Visual Representation*, Word & Image Interactions 4, L Hoek and P de Voogd (eds.), Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York, 2005, pp.151-159, quote p.154.
[13] J Thomas, 2000, op.cit.
[14] Ibid., p.106.
[15] J Ruskin, 'Arrows of the Chace', in ET Cook and A Wedderburn (eds.), *The Works of John Ruskin*, George Allen, London and Longmans, Green & Co., New York, 1903-1912, vol.XXXIV, p.576, quoted in K Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination,* Cambridge University Press, UK, 2000, pp.194-195.
[16] Anon, review of *Past and Present of Ballarat, Ballarat Star*, 21 March 1893, p.2, cols 6-7.
[17] For an analysis of Victorian art criticism see for example K Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination,* Cambridge University Press, UK, 2000.
[18] Ibid., p.196.
[19] B Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn., Verso, London and New York, 2006, p.93.
[20] However, this argument is a complex one. Arrighi has argued that part of the continued success of the empire was the development of economic nationalism: the accumulation of monetary surpluses in the colonies and domestic economy-making. G Arrighi, op.cit., p.50.
[21] J Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image*, Ohio University Press, 2004, p.114, acknowledging the analysis of HK Bhabha, *Nation and Narration,* Routledge, London and New York, 1990.
[22] G Davison, 'Festivals of Nationhood: The International Exhibitions', in SL Goldberg and FB Smith (eds.), *Australian Cultural Heritage*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp.158-174.
[23] Anon, 'French Criticism on British Art', *The Art Journal,* 1855, pp.229-32. Note 'anectodical' in use in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, now 'anecdotal'.
[24] J Thomas, 2004, op.cit.
[25] M du Camp, 'French Criticism on British Art', *The Art Journal*, 1856, pp.77-79.
[26] M Heusser, 2005, op.cit.
[27] Ibid., p.153.
[28] Ibid., p.151.

[29] Ibid., p.154.
[30] Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, London,1995, p.21.
[31] Meek's vast compilations of data are comparable to Victorian Government publications of the time in which there is a strong emphasis on statistics. In particular, those intended for an international readership published a formidable array of facts, figures and information, see for example *Statistical summary of the progress of the colony of Victoria to the year 1865: compiled from official records in the Registrar-General's Office, Melbourne, for the Dublin International Exhibition of 1865,* Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer, 1865.
[32] M Heusser, 2005, op.cit., p.156.
[33] Said, op.cit., p.21.
[34] There is, however, nothing simple about presenting information: data are never neutral.
[35] text lower centre
[36] text lower centre
[37] The situation in Ballarat in the early 1850s and its role in the birth of democracy and nationalism are discussed in the exhibition catalogue, pp.14-31, especially pp.22-31.
[38] E von Guérard, *Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853–4*, 1884, oil on canvas mounted on board, 75.0 x 138.6 cm, Art Gallery of Ballarat.
[39] JE Meadows, *Ballarat*, 1886, oil on canvas, Art Gallery of Ballarat.
[40] Samuel Douglas Smith Huyghue was a Canadian-born writer and artist who arrived in Australia in 1852, becoming a clerk in the Office of Mines in Ballarat on the goldfields. He subsequently wrote an account of the 1854 Eureka Rebellion and his watercolour portraying the uprising was donated to the Art Gallery of Ballarat by his sister after his death. The Gallery bought further works by Huyghe in 1974 and 2002, as important records of early Ballarat.
[41] Samuel Thomas Gill (1818-1880). S Grishin, *S.T. Gill & His Audiences*, National Library of Australia Publishing, Canberra, ACT and State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, 2015.
[42] The extent of Meek's success and his ultimate fall into obscurity are discussed throughout the exhibition catalogue, see for example pp.43-47, 59-60, 71, 73, 75.

BALLARAT'S HISTORICAL GUM-TREE AS PROPAGANDA

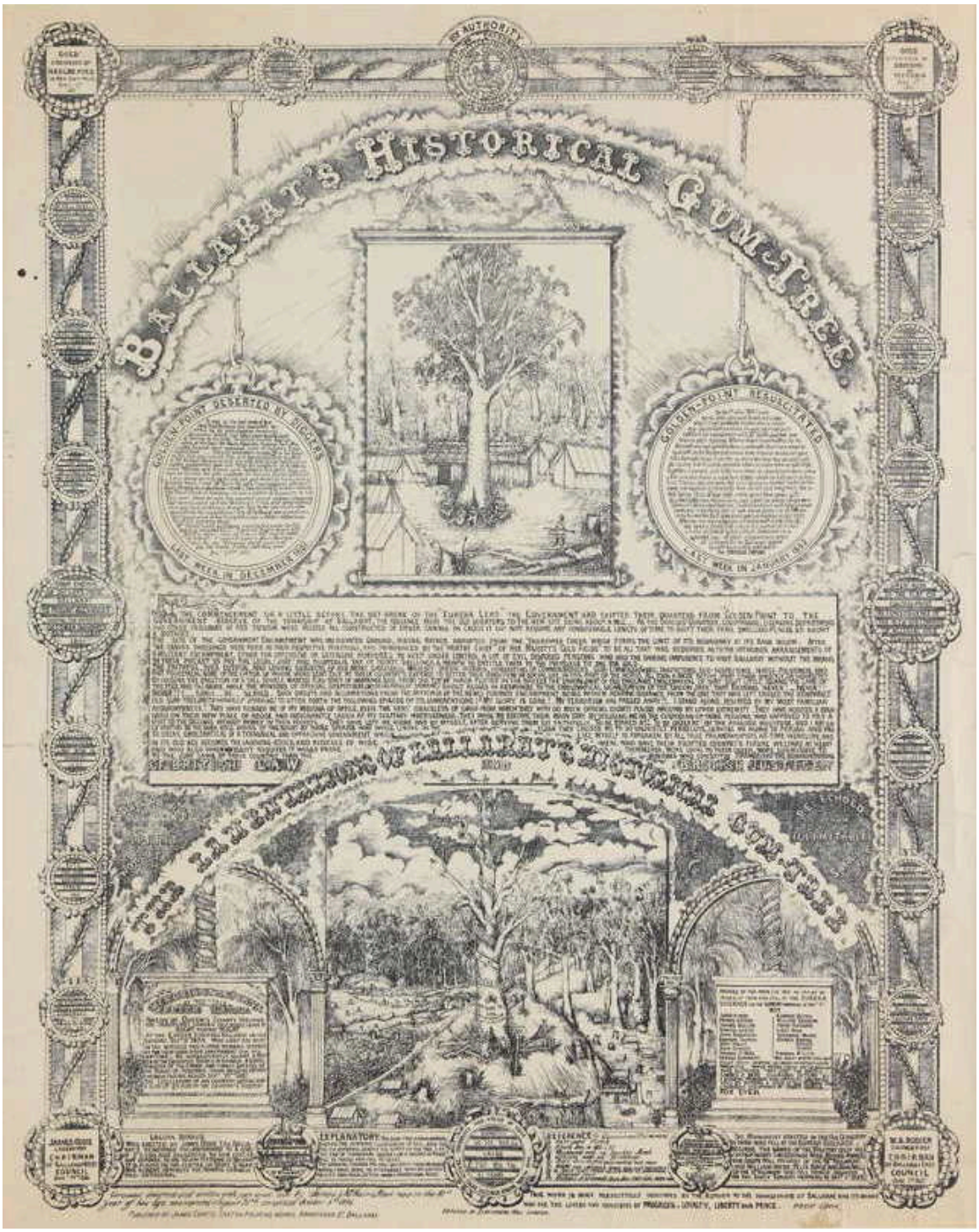


Figure 20. JM Meek, James Curtis, printer, *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* (proof copy), 1895, photolithograph, 61.7 x 48.7 cm, Art Gallery of Ballarat.

On 21 February 1893, having returned to Ballarat after a decade and a half spent in New Zealand, Meek went in search of "the old primitive watchtower, viz a gum tree which was situated in the midst of the first government encampment." The tree had been used to shackle miscreants in the early days, mostly diggers found without a licence, before gaol facilities were built. Meek's diary records that it was gone without trace.[1]

Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree, perhaps Meek's most idiosyncratic work, was drawn two years later. It is a commentary on the Eureka Stockade of 3 December 1854, given from the perspective of the gum tree. Meek was not an eyewitness to the events in Ballarat but the rebellion was etched deep in the colony's psyche. James Oddie, a founding father of Ballarat, had commissioned an oil painting in 1883 of the goldfield settlement at the time of Eureka by the eminent European artist Eugene von Guérard, who had spent time on the diggings. Oddie was making a clear political point with the commission and in his donation of the work to the city, a strong statement about Ballarat's beginnings and his own pro-miner position. Ten years on, when Meek produced his work, Eureka was no less contentious.[2] In this context, and given the vibrant polemic he writes in the work, it is relevant to consider the extent to which Meek was attempting to influence public opinion.

The art of influence is arguably as old as human communication. The earliest known victory steles dating from 3-2000 BC promote the victor's view of battles and conquests; ancient Greek and Roman monumental art and architecture, coinage and medals aggrandise leaders and military might; the Bayeux Tapestry dignifies the Norman conquest of England, portrayed from the Norman point of view. Religious ideologies are advanced in ecclesiastical art in the Middle Ages, and the ideal of chivalry is embraced in literature and art in support of the Crusades. Renaissance Machiavellian politics deploy every artifice as a means to an end, and patrons with their own social and political agendas determine what artists produce. Texts and images incite revolutions, campaign for wars, make and break empires.[3]

From a twenty-first-century viewpoint, it appears that a good deal of art over millennia has been in the service of vested interests attempting to shape public opinion; it has been

propaganda in a sense that is recognisable to the modern analyst. In a formal sense, the use of the term 'propaganda' is thought to date from 1622 when Pope Gregory XV established the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagating of the Faith), a missionary organisation intended to propagate beliefs, values and practices, designed to counteract the ideas of the Protestant Reformation.[4]

It is useful to distinguish propaganda and persuasion, the latter a relatively neutral term denoting the broad dissemination of political ideas, religious evangelism and commercial advertising. Some theorists argue that propaganda became a pejorative term from the outset, due to the intention of the Catholic Church to extend the reach of Catholicism and thwart Protestantism.[5] Other writers place the word's loss of innocence in the ideological battles of the twentieth century.[6] Two world wars, chilling images of 'the hun' abducting children, the slogans of totalitarian regimes in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, and Cold War fear-mongering, enveloped the word in the sinister associations of mistrust and misinformation that attach to its definition today. *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* may not be sinister, but it certainly bears a strident message and it displays many of the elements that constitute propaganda, in its design, images and text.

The tablet is divided horizontally into two segments by a central block of text. The upper and the lower segment each has a central image of a tree, set within a rectangle, flanked on both sides by symmetrical elements. In the upper segment two embellished hanging medallions in-filled with text are positioned beside the tree. Similarly, in the lower segment on each side of the tree, there are two pillared archways enclosing tombstones inscribed with text. Both upper and lower segments are framed at the top with a horizontal lunette of elaborate lettering. The geometric border around the work is entwined with a continuous band of laurel leaves on three sides, interspersed at regular intervals with small medallions displaying data on Ballarat and its luminaries.

The composition is dense and crowded. At first sight, it is teeming with disparate elements but closer examination reveals that there are essentially three key visual motifs that recur in the work: the tree, the medallion, and the tombstone, the most prominent of which is the tree. For propaganda to be effective the image must be widely recognisable, imbued with clear political import, and significant to the public. Its potency

> depends on the public's ability to identify the elements depicted and attribute them to their intended symbolic value [and] the forms of the image and the thematic language … are rooted in … graphic traditions already endowed with political significance.[7]

There is no doubt that the Camp Tree was an immediately recognisable and highly charged image for Meek's public in that it encapsulated the deeply divisive issue of the government's handling of mining licences in the 1850s: this work is clearly about the Eureka Rebellion. Meek takes the tree image and develops it, presenting two contrasting views, one in the original encampment, diggers chained to the base of a healthy tree, the other showing the tree as dead, entwined by serpents, skull and crossbones clearly blazed on it. The graphic composition of the work rests on the visual representation of a fundamental opposition, the live and the dead tree. The message is carried by recognisable visual symbols (the tree) and metaphor (the tree dies); the objective is the visual reproduction of an argument.[8]

Meek was not the only artist to use the visual trope of a tree in the service of political comment. The 'Rotten Borough Tree',[9] a satirical image that had currency in the 1830s, was widely published and would have been familiar to Meek and his audience.[10] It denounced a long-standing electoral practice in which depopulated electorates that retained their original representation could be used by a patron to control parliamentary seats.

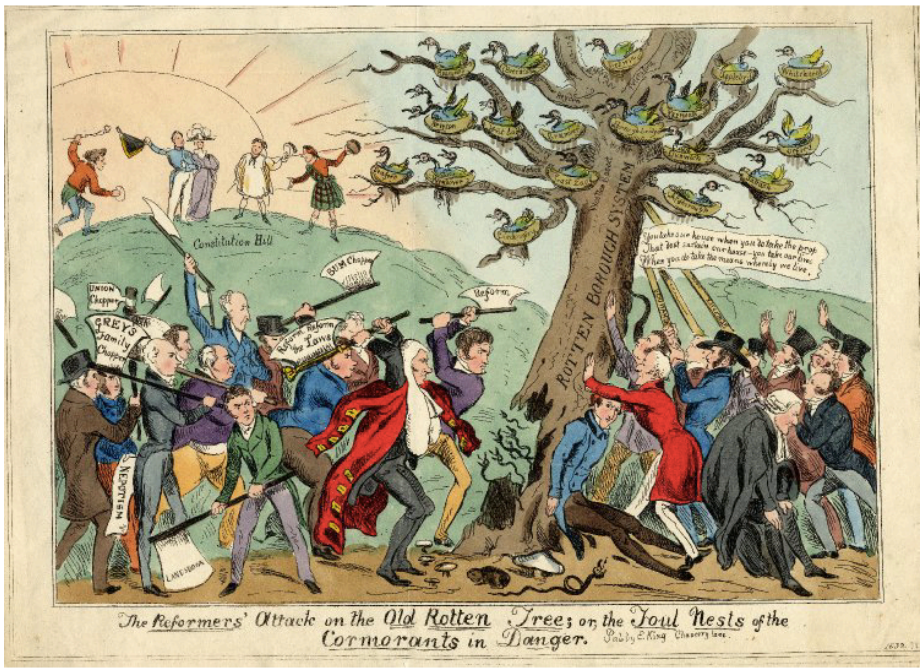


Figure 21. E King, publisher, *The Reformers' Attack on the Old Rotten Tree; or The Foul Nests of the Cormorants in Danger* 1831, work on paper, 29.2 x 40.6 cm, British Museum.

The Camp Tree and the Rotten Borough Tree are employed differently; Meek's tree is the reluctant witness to political iniquity while the British tree represents corruption and is under attack. Nonetheless, while Meek's work lacks the irony inherent in the satirical image, the general association of the Rotten Borough Tree with political corruption would not have been lost on Meek's audience. In their recognition of that earlier image, Meek's visual argument about the transgressions of the local government in the Eureka event would have been subliminally reinforced.

As in all Meek's large tablets, grand lettering announces his theme, and miniature text draws the reader/viewer in close to the work to discover the detail. *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* uses a key image, the Camp Tree, with topical resonance, and therefore legible to a broad public, that acquires symbolic significance in the specific Ballarat context in which it is used. The text links the image to the specific Eureka context and provides the argument.[11] Meek uses two oppositional headlines: he announces the subject, "Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree", in his trademark freehand lettering above the image of the live Camp Tree and repeats the title in the lower section of the work, this time as "The Lamentations of Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree" above the image of the dead tree. In this way text and image together embody the damage done by the state.[12]

The main thrust of Meek's argument is contained in the text box that is central to the work, both literally and figuratively. The text begins as historical narrative, but by line six (of twenty-three) any sense of objective information breaks down and the language becomes a highly charged diatribe. Forces of government are associated with "despotism", "terrorism", "tyrannical and oppressive government", who "indignantly laugh", "persecute", and "ridicule" the diggers; the diggers themselves are "faithful, ever dutiful, and loving subjects", simply trying "to better their social condition."[13]

Another pair of oppositional titles occurs on the large medallions that flank the live tree: "Golden-Point Deserted" and "Golden-Point Resuscitated". Golden Point was well known and instantly recognisable to Meek's audience as one of the earliest diggings on the Ballarat goldfields. Legends had grown up around those early days and tales of the times continued to captivate the public and provide much fuel for controversy. Meek's text appears factual, providing names and numbers, dates and quotations, but it is

essentially anecdotal, a personal memoir in which Meek accords himself a significant role in the foundation of Ballarat.[14]

While the tree is the salient image in Meek's work, the tombstone and medallion motifs further develop Meek's visual argument. The pair of tombstones that border the dead tree in the lower section of the work provide a visual symbol of death and honour and act in concert to support the rebel cause. They project a sympathetic view of those killed at Eureka and honour the role of Peter Lalor, leader of the rebellion. The medallions embody authority, resembling medals awarded for success and valour, and stamps or seals of authority. Once again, the vocabulary is charged, emotive.[15] Peter Lalor acts "in a noble cause of RIGHT against MIGHT"; those who fell at Eureka were "killed while fighting or more truthfully stating massacred" and "gained a…glorious victory by crusading [against] arrogant and official despotism and by putting a stop to the inhuman and cowardly occupation of digger hunting – FOR EVER". "Digger hunting" is a particularly inflammatory phrase, as is the description of the battle as a massacre.

Importantly, alongside the invective, there are also strong positive elements in the work. Every one of the twenty-four medallions set in the perimeter recounts an achievement of the 1850s: gold discovery, the surveying and white settlement of the Ballarat township, its first institutions and Council, and the astounding amount of gold taken from Victoria in the ensuing four decades. These less controversial data enhance the inhabitants' sense of satisfaction, self-worth and affiliation in the 1890s. This is an important aspect of how propaganda functions. As Jonathan Auerbach has pointed out, "to be effective, propaganda must harness a rich affective range beyond negative emotions such as hatred, fear and envy to include more positive feelings such as pleasure, joy, belonging and pride."[16] This notion indicates the importance of desire in the shaping of beliefs, and an understanding of how forces of desire are linked to pleasure, "a dimension largely overlooked in [recent] propaganda studies."[17] The crowning glory in this rush of pride and pleasure is the Victorian coat of arms set at the apex of the work, proclaiming its legitimacy by authority of no less a figure than the Acting Governor of the State. A handful of Meek's works claim patronage of, or are 'respectfully dedicated to', a state figure. Whether Sir John Madden knew precisely what he was patronising is unknown – no documentation has been found regarding how Meek sought his imprimatur for the

work, but the crest appears to sanction and legitimise the work. It implies that this version of events must surely be the right version.

Meek harnesses a sense of physical reality to add conviction to his message. The original Camp Tree is drawn in situ with its familiar trappings: tent and bark offices are set adjacent to uncleared land with the armed guard watching over the diggers. The dead tree is positioned in a landscape that the viewer/reader is expected to recognise and actively encouraged to explore: there are ten numbered topographical and built features marked on the sketch and a "Reference" or legend is provided to identify each one.[18] This would have been irresistible to the 'old timers' viewing the work forty years later. The mapping of the landscape by Meek in this way extends "the role of the image beyond its initial visual impact [and it] becomes a documentary one providing illustrative visual proof of the claims made in the text."[19] Moreover, the sheer amount of historical information Meek provides, "putative factual evidence"[20] designed to impress, suggests a verifiable, unassailable, reality. Meek makes a powerful appeal to truth in the service of his argument, conflating factual claims with moral judgements.

Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree focuses on a single issue, the Eureka Rebellion, which it represents iconographically by a small number of repeated elements that symbolically embody the central idea. The specific elements of the graphic composition serve to heighten the central message and the text drives it home; text and image are interdependent in delivering Meek's political message.[21] But something more is needed to establish the work as propaganda.

The purpose of propaganda has been variously defined, as noted, some theorists arguing for a neutral position in which persuasion is not necessarily connected to untruth and is not intrinsically immoral.[22] Others take a stronger position, asserting that propaganda necessarily involves falsification or mental manipulation and that it entails a conscious and deliberate effort to influence the recipients to advance the author's interests.[23] This raises the important question of Meek's purpose.

Jacques Ellul posits that untruth is not intrinsic to propaganda, however, he does claim that "propaganda is necessarily false when it speaks of values, of truth, of good, of justice, of happiness – and when it interprets and colors facts and imputes meaning to

them."[24] Meek's work does deal with the notions of Queen, England, the Union Jack, British law and British justice, and portrays them as the ultimate source of right, without question or qualification, but his key proposition is that local government, in its treatment of the diggers, has violated an inalienable British right to fairness and liberty. So while, as Meek acknowledges, "Britons never shall be slaves",[25] he pointedly highlights the contrast between the ambition and the reality of the miners: an effective simplification and exaggeration designed to forward his argument. When considered from the point of view of Ellul's thesis, Meek's text is inherently misleading. But what is at work here is not only ideas, it is the strength of Meek's horror at the lived experience of real miners and his sense of outrage at a government whose actions caused them harm. It may be propaganda, but it is also a *cri de cœur*.

If the purpose of propaganda is "to provoke an emotive response to rallying symbols",[26] this work certainly qualifies. Meek felt strongly about the issues embedded in the Eureka Rebellion, but that alone does not adequately address the question of his intention in producing this work: what was he attempting and why? There are several possible answers to this.

Meek was radical in his politics and was outspoken in his ideas for improvements in the colonies throughout his career. Letters to the editor, newspaper articles, and notices and reviews of public lectures on matters as diverse as commercial fishing, road and rail infrastructure and communications, and the nationalisation of lands span forty years.[27] Two years after producing *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree*, Meek wrote a lengthy essay on *Pensions for Old Age*.[28] This body of material demonstrates his commitment to contributing to the development of the colonies and of his personal social justice values. The relentless promotion of his ideas, even into old age and ill health, was typical of the man. Propaganda in favour of the underdog would be unsurprising, given the driven quality of his character and his personal agenda.

In 1893, two years before he drew this work, Meek had a very public disagreement in the Ballarat press with WB Withers, a local writer, journalist and historian, concerning the date that Meek had built his house in early Ballarat.[29] A journalist quoted an incorrect date of 1851 for the build, and this attracted sceptical, if not slightly sarcastic, comment. This materially impacted Meek's claim of building the first solid dwelling (in 1852) and

being the first white resident in the newly surveyed township area, a claim of which he was extremely proud.[30] Meek's lengthy response to Withers in the press was acerbic: he had clearly taken offence. In his letter Meek took the opportunity to mention his own forthcoming publication, *Reminiscences of the Early Days of Ballarat*, Meek's history of the city.[31] This work is in direct competition with Withers' published history, the second edition of which was struggling to make sales in the depressed economy of the 1890s.[32] It is reasonable to surmise that Meek saw Withers as a rival, and felt dismissed by him in the grand narrative of the birth of Ballarat. Meek's elaborate and emotive account of the city's history, and the way in which he gives himself an important place within it, can be seen, at least in part, as a riposte.

Finally, if nothing else, Meek was trying to make a living. What better way than to create an eye-catching, heart-grabbing, tantalising work, bound to engage his Ballarat and Victorian audience with its provocative subject matter. Of course, he could have addressed the subject just as prettily without the polemic – but that would not be Meek.

Propaganda is usually put to work on behalf of group interests. In *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* it is one man's individual view that is being advanced, but it is arguably no less propaganda for being a personal, idiosyncratic stand.

[1] JM Meek, diary entry, 21 February 1893, transcribed in JT Dallimore (ed.), *The Journal of the Meek Family History Fellowship,* September 1988, no.7, p.63. For a detailed analysis of *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* see the exhibition catalogue, pp.14-31.

[2] For a fuller discussion of Oddie's and Meek's approach to this subject see the exhibition catalogue, pp.28, 30.

[3] For an overview of the history of propaganda see for example C Moore, *Propaganda Prints: A History of Art in the Service of Social and Political Change*, A&C Black Publishers Ltd, London, 2010; T Clark, *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: The Political Image in the Age of Mass Culture*, Harry N Abrams, New York, 1997.

[4] MT Prendergast and TA Prendergast, 'The Invention of Propaganda: A Critical Commentary on and Translation of Inscrutabili Divinae Providentiae Arcano', in J Auerbach and R Castronovo (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda Studies*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2013, pp.19-27; T Clark, op.cit., p.7.

[5] GS Jowett and V O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, rev.edn., Sage Publications, 2012, p.2.

[6] See for example T Clark, op.cit. p.7; C Moore, op.cit.

[7] R Rennie, 'Visual Representations of Political Discourse: The Example of the French Communist Party between the Wars', in M Heusser, M Hannoosh, L Hoek, C Schoell-Glass and D Scott (eds.), *Text and Visuality,* Word & Image Interactions 3, Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1999, pp.187-96, quote p.188, referencing Jacques Ellul's seminal work on propaganda.

[8] Ibid., p.190.

[9] E King, publisher, *The Reformers' Attack on the Old Rotten Tree; or The Foul Nests of the Cormorants in Danger,* 1831, British Museum, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=73249001&objectid=1496247, accessed 15 December 2015.

[10] The availability of material pouring into the colonies in the second half of the nineteenth century, including newspapers, periodicals and magazines, has been noted in the exhibition catalogue, pp.75, 81. See for example the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute collection, https://ballaratmi.org.au/heritage, accessed 27 April 2017.

[11] Ibid., p.192.

[12] Ibid., p.195.

[13] A transcription of the main text block is given in the exhibition catalogue, p.84.

[14] The medallion texts are legible in the exhibition catalogue, pp.18-19 and a full discussion of Meek's attempt to present himself as founder of the city is given, pp.22-31.

[15] The tombstone texts are legible in the exhibition catalogue, pp.20-21.

[16] J Auerbach and R Castronovo, 'Introduction: Thirteen Propositions About Propaganda' in J Auerbach and R Castronovo (eds.), op.cit., p.10.

[17] Ibid., p.11.

[18] The sketch of the landscape surrounding the dead tree, and the accompanying legend, require very high magnification in order to identify the ten details, but they are present. Due to the exhibition and surrounding publicity, this work has been valuable to researchers in the dispute over the site of the original camp. This matter was relevant to the curatorial process, see Part 2, 'Re-Presenting Mr Meek', pp.27-28.

[19] R Rennie, op.cit., p.194.

[20] R Marlin, 'Jacques Ellul's Contribution to Propaganda Studies', in J Auerbach and R Castronovo (eds.), op.cit., pp.348-65, quote p.357.

[21] R Rennie, op.cit., pp.192, 194.

[22] For example J Ellul, *Propaganda. The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, L Konrad and J Keller (trans.), Vintage, New York, 1973, p.59; J Auerbach and R Castronovo, op.cit., p.5.

[23] For example R Rennie, op.cit., p.187; J MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, England, 1984, p.3.

[24] J Ellul, op.cit., p.59.

[25] JM Meek, *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree*, op.cit., text in central panel, lines 12-13, 21-23.

[26] R Rennie, op.cit., p.194.

[27] See Appendix 1 for this material, included in the catalogue of Meek's known works.

[28] JM Meek, *Essay on Pensions for Old Age*, c.1896, original manuscript, unpublished, held by the Art Gallery of Ballarat. Also transcribed in JT Dallimore (ed.), *The Journal of the Meek Family History*

Fellowship: no.22, pp.208, 211–213; no.23, pp.224–225; no.25, p.243; no.28, pp.269–271; no.29, pp.279–280.

[29] The stoush unfolded over several days, see T Bury, *Ballarat Star*, 17 November 1893, p.2, col.7; WB Withers, 'Mr Meek's Hut. To the Editor', *Ballarat Star*, 18 November 1893, p.4, col.3; JM Meek, Mr Meek's Hut. To the Editor', *Ballarat Star*, 21 November 1893, p.4, col.2; R Allen, Mr Meek's Hut. To the Editor', *Ballarat Star*, 23 November 1893, p.4, col.1.

[30] The strength and viability of his claim are discussed in the exhibition catalogue, pp.24, 26.

[31] Meek's book does not appear to have been published and no manuscript has been found to date. See exhibition catalogue, pp.26, 30, 31, 56.

[32] The competition between the two men is noted in the exhibition catalogue, p.31.

THE *GENERAL MAP OF AUSTRALIA:* THE POWER OF CARTOGRAPHY

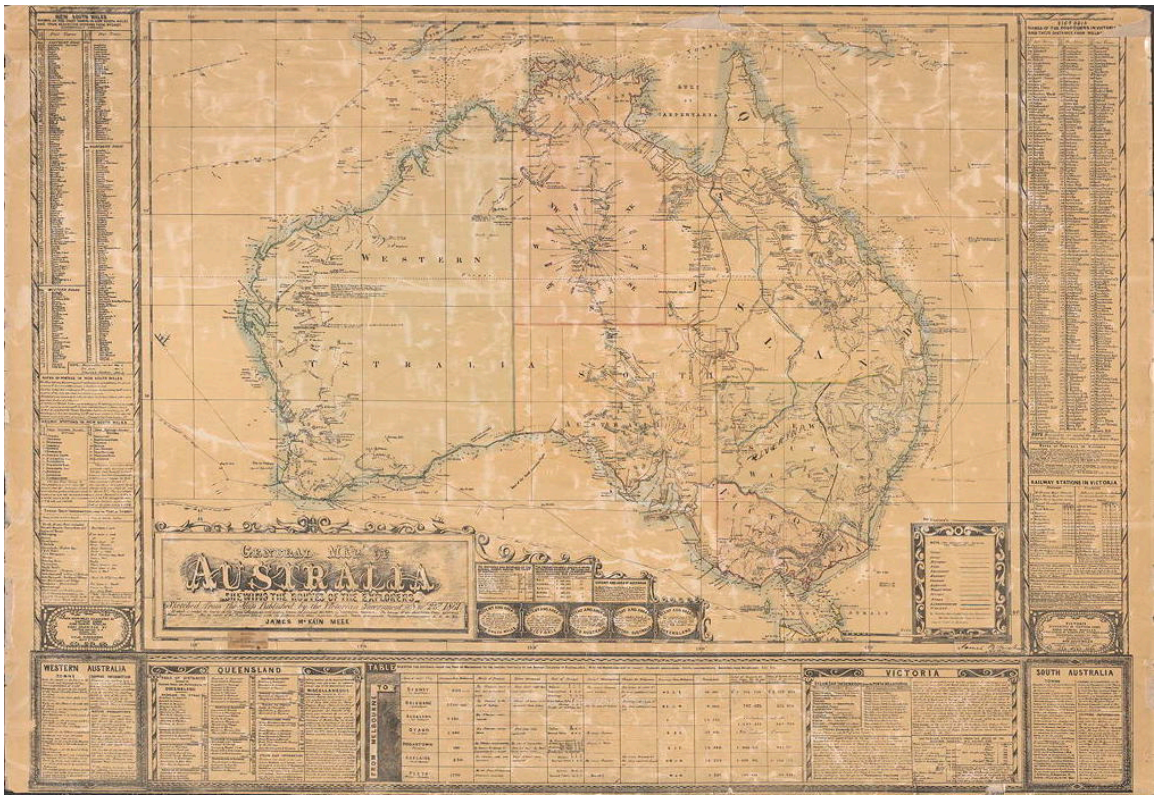


Figure 22. JM Meek, de Gruchy and Leigh, printer, *General Map of Australia Shewing the Routes of the Explorers*, 1861, photolithograph, 55.3 x 77.3 cm, University of Melbourne, Maps Collection.

As much as guns and warships, maps have been the weapons of imperialism.
JB Harley[1]

Maps are both viewed and read; in this sense they present an intriguing relationship between verbal and visual representation. They are a mixture of word and image, art and science, an interplay between two semiotic systems, cartography and writing. This contrast and coalescence of textual and pictorial elements was increasingly discernible as printing techniques developed rapidly in the nineteenth century, allowing words and diagrams to mingle on the page, and the relationship between meaning and form to be visible.[2] Meek embraced the new technologies such as photolithography[3] that enabled him to produce his trademark marriage of words and images with improved quality.[4] Reviewers of his *General Map of Australia Shewing the Routes of the Explorers* 1861[5] remarked upon its production by the latest technique. "The map was originally introduced by Mr Meek on a very large scale in pen and ink. It has now been reduced and printed by the photo-lithographic process invented and patented by Mr J. W. Osborne, of the Survey Department, Melbourne."[6] It "is curious as being multiplied by photography. The original is done by hand, and copies are taken in sections."[7]

Cartography has been described as "an attempt to fill geographic space with knowledge, in a graphical form, that can be understood communally",[8] a definition surely consistent with Meek's objective in the *General Map* and consistent with the understanding of his reviewers who declared it to be "correct".[9] But implicit in this definition are key questions about the process of mapmaking that need to be addressed. It is an "attempt", therefore not a complete picture; this suggests that a map may be less authoritative and fixed than might be supposed. It provides "knowledge"; but the type of knowledge given, who has selected it, and the purpose of the map all influence what is produced. It is for "communal" understanding, but it is important to know whose community it is intended for: the concept of community entails the inclusion of people and groups and the exclusion of others who are not within that community. Knowledge and community also imply that there is a social and political context for the map: this will inevitably impact on its production and use. These questions have a direct bearing on Meek's *General Map*.

Interest in maps heightened during the nineteenth century and this was linked to the development of geography as a discipline. Cartography was not studied as an independent subject but was primarily a servant of geography, particularly geographical discovery and exploration.[10] Meek's *Map* is in this tradition, as were other maps in circulation earlier in the nineteenth century. Some of the preceding maps, however, were more speculative in their geography and overtly political in their intent. In 1831, Thomas Maslen, a former officer of the East India Company, produced his *Sketch of the Coasts of Australia and the supposed Entrance of the Great River: principally designed to illustrate the Narrative of M. Baudins* [sic] *voyage on the West and N.W. coasts*, the map deriving from a reduced 1822 Admiralty Chart.[11] It is distinguished by an imagined central inland sea, and vast mountain ranges in the West of the continent. Maslen had never been to Australia and his map reflects popular beliefs at the time regarding its likely geography, extrapolated from the geography and climate of countries in similar latitudes in the northern hemisphere, and from other colonial experiences, in Maslen's case, from India.[12] James Vetsch, a Fellow of the Royal Society and a founding Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, published his *Map of Australia* in 1838.[13] He saw the 'blank canvas' of the Australian continent as an opportunity to apply an orderly, planned, political and social system, a utopian vision for Australia's future. He had spent lengthy periods in Mexico as a surveyor and engineer. Like Maslen, Vetsch had never been to Australia and his Central American experience informed his geographical conjecture.[14] It should be noted that in this period, the newly founded (1831) Royal Geographical Society sanctioned speculative geography, "as a means of exciting curiosity and stimulating enquiry, so long as theories … were 'supported by reasonable probabilities'."[15] There were scientists and thinkers who were critical of the limitations of nineteenth-century cartography. Men such as Jacques Élisée Reclus and Charles Perron, two geographers working from the 1870s to the turn of the century, became dissatisfied with accepted cartographic principles, the hagiographies of geographical discoveries, and the poor cartographic accuracy of the day.[16] But these were not concerns shared by many and it would take until the twentieth century for critical discourse on cartography to emerge.

Meek's *General Map of Australia Shewing the Routes of the Explorers* 1861 is "sketched from the map published by the Victorian Government Nov 23rd 1861." It evidences the extent of the hard-won physical exploration of the interior of the continent in the thirty years since Maslen and Vetsch had mapped Australia in their imaginations. The outline of

the main landmass occupies most of the page, the borders of six discrete areas are marked within it, and the northernmost coastline of Van Dieman's Land (now Tasmania) is shown. The *Map* is bordered on three sides by a prodigious amount of information written in miniature text. Data for New South Wales and Victoria occupy the left and right side panels respectively, and the lower border gives information for Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia, with a further inset of Victorian data.[17] Extensive lists of towns and distances are provided, along with railway lines, timetables and costs, steamship details, ports and resources. The extent and area of the colonies, the size of Australia and comparisons with other countries are given. In the coastal waters, soundings and maritime features are marked. However, the *Map*'s title declares its main purpose as showing major exploration routes, and thirteen are marked across the continent.

The *General Map* filled a vital need in the colonies, judging by positive newspaper reviews in 1862 and 1863 in Melbourne, Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong, Warrnambool, Sydney, Rockhampton and Adelaide.[18] "Of the numerous pen and ink productions of Mr Meek, his map of Central Australia, just issued, is decidedly the best"[19] and "superior in many points to any yet published."[20] The Sydney *Empire* afforded the *Map* much attention:

> MAPS - We have before us two maps, the production of Mr. James McKain Meek, which if they exhibited nothing else worthy of notice might well attract our attention by the wonderful amount of minute industry, and the more than wonderful attainment of calligraphic skill they evince. But these maps evince more than these qualities. They display in combination with these very enlarged geographical research, much judicious reading of the history and progress of this group of colonies, and a discriminative power in the arrangement of statistics, which invests these maps with a value and usefulness, which cannot be too highly estimated. The first and the most practically useful of these maps, is a general map of Australia, showing the routes of the various explorers. The exploration routes indicated on the map are those of Oxley, Sturt, Mitchell, Eyre, Liechhardt, Kennedy, Gregory, Babbage, Warburton, Stuart, Burke, and Landsborough. The map as far as we have been able to study it, appears to be very complete in the geographical instruction it is intended to convey, and will supply a want as to information respecting the new country recently so largely developed, which will day by day press more urgently upon us. [The Atlas is then reviewed.] These maps are complete to every letter and figure, being worked out with a beauty of precision almost inconceivable. They are intended to be published as photo-Iithographs, and hence the care taken in their original completion. The impressions will be struck off exact to copy by light, and thence transferred to stone. We hope Mr. Meek will be repaid in the circulation of his maps for the Herculean amount of labour he must have bestowed upon them.[21]

Whereas Maslen and Vetsch created maps that were visions for a new country, intended explicitly to stimulate exploration and settlement, and as projects for social reform (for Britain's benefit as much as for the new colonies themselves), Meek's *General Map* is

intended to describe a literally grounded reality, and was received as such. It was "extremely valuable for reference"[22] and "Mr. Landsborough's route was drawn on the original by himself, and may therefore be relied upon as correct."[23] But maps lie, they are untruthful by their very nature. The flat map is not a sphere, it is a distortion of the earth's surface and is therefore already 'untruthful'. The map does not portray the geographical world as it is, but through data.[24] Meek appears to give exhaustive amounts of information, but this process is necessarily one of selection. By including some data he thereby omits all kinds of details, choosing those features he considers important and that will be valued by his reader/viewers.

Maps are designed for indexical purposes, that is, for reference and for orientation.[25] They describe ways of finding, and not losing oneself. In this way, they function as a metaphor of guidance: ways not be lost physically in a vast and threatening land, and lost morally in the dubious enterprise of dispossession. They also "reveal and make visible structures and relationships that would otherwise remain hidden",[26] connecting things and at the same time disconnecting them. On the map, Australia is revealed as a whole continent and simultaneously it is visibly separate as an island.[27] Maps are fixed diagrams that can be usefully referred to over time, and yet they are unstable; the colonial boundaries that Meek drew on his *General Map* were different in 1860, 1862, and 1863 and they changed throughout the century.[28]

The mammalian instinct to define territory is supremely evident in the human enterprise of mapmaking. Meek's work both celebrates the vastness of Australia alongside clear signs of its subjugation. The continent has been depicted and described, it has been mapped; it is therefore known, measured and contained, "buttressing the claims of effective and moral proprietorship by demonstrating to the colonists and the outside world that they have conquered the landscape."[29] One of the ways in which this conquest is achieved, demonstrated and perpetuated is by the important business of naming things.[30] The human drive to make sense of a bewildering world (and country) involves knowing where one is, locating oneself in a named space. The deracination and dislocation of the colonists' move, whether by force, fear or fortune, is assuaged by defining where one is, by naming the new place. This is achieved in various ways: by transferring names from home, by naming one's lived experience of the land (as in Mt Hopeless and the Blue Mountains), by honouring past heroes (as in Mt Macedon), and by acknowledging current

rulers, 'Victoria' being the ubiquitous example throughout the empire. Naming the routes of contemporary explorers takes the process of appropriation to another level. Michel de Certeau has described walking and writing as physical, spatial practices.[31] The explorers and cartographers of Australia wrote the story of the country bodily, some died while doing so. Meek also inscribed the story of Australia bodily, and suffered in his efforts, but in the writing of it, the myths and legends of a country were born.

Cartography is immensely powerful in the project of empire and this can be seen from the outset of British encroachment in Australia. Paul Carter gives a detailed argument about the power of the explorers' cultural context in naming the landscape, and the political and economic pressures on them "to locate objects of cultural significance: rivers, mountains, meadows, plains of promise."[32] The explorers did not view the landscape in terms of geographical description – the country in many ways defied their attempts to describe it – but rather in terms of its utility for the imperial project.

A series of fundamental assumptions including a mindset of superior civilisation accompanied the first explorers and settlers; these assumptions proved at the same time beneficial and catastrophic. One of the most basic premises was the concept of cartographic emptiness.[33] Without this presumption, the political implications for the Aboriginal inhabitants would have been different, and Meek's *General Map* could not have looked the way it did. There is almost no evidence on Meek's *Map* that Australia was occupied by another race of people, either historically or currently; the only clue might be the strangeness of some toponyms, Barnawartha and Bullarook, Wahgunyah and Werracknebeal [sic] are distinctly exotic, but these are relatively few compared with the majority that are recognisably British.[34] The very act of naming "presupposes the right to make place out of space."[35] Maps present an authoritative picture; they take an implicit scientific stance and provide seemingly disinterested data. Meek's *Map* is underpinned by an attitude of a natural right to intrude and observe, justified by the notion that such observation was part of scientific endeavour, the development of knowledge and the march of civilisation.[36] From this perspective, maps not only legitimised the colonial enterprise, they also became part of territorial appropriation.

Graham Huggan has described maps as "both a document and an invention."[37] They are endlessly engaging, full of imaginative power as they entice the viewer/reader into all

kinds of paradoxes, dual processes, and shifts of focus. Viewers find themselves in front of maps and inside them: a constant alternation of a bird's-eye view and an imagined experience on the ground requiring a mental conversion of the geographic into the visual.[38] There is a constant oscillation between proximity and distance, the detail and the whole, the known and the unknown, what is seen and what is imagined, the objective and the subjective.[39] This interactive quality stimulates involvement and demands investment by the viewer, a process that is clearly demonstrated by the reviewers of Meek's *Map* in the *Empire's* long and detailed report. One can almost see the journalists poring over it, noting its "beauty of precision",[40] tracing out routes with their fingers and swapping stories, completely absorbed. Robert Louis Stevenson, who derived fame and fortune from at least one well-known map, understood that maps were "a mine of suggestion",[41] as did a long list of other authors, from Swift and Defoe, to Tolkien and present day writers. Maps are "a powerful medium in which different discourses, power strategies and systems of knowledge interact."[42] It is not surprising that they are a potent literary device for securing reader involvement.[43] Indeed, mapmakers have been attributed with a critical role equivalent to that of an author.[44]

Maps *represent* the territory they refer to, literally meaning they "bring something into someone's presence."[45] From the settlers' point of view, maps such as Meek's both provided practical assistance and captured their imagination. The map enabled them to visualise the geography of the country in a similar way that landscape art influenced the public image of what Australia was. More than that, the map stimulated a vision of what Australia could be after the frontier. Its very existence conjures up a story, a plot, an adventure.[46] The routes of the explorers that Meek so painstakingly drew helped the settlers tell stories about themselves and a process of identification began. Thus maps functioned, as did art, as mediated, extended seeing which was vital not only in justifying the incomers' imperial position, but also "played a cardinal role in the conceptualisation of the nascent nation."[47] The photolithograph of Meek's *General Map* held in the National Library of Australia's collection has McKinlay's exploration route added by hand.[48] It also has "RIVERINA" handwritten across an area of New South Wales. These markings were made after the *Map*'s publication[49] and this kind of interaction with it illustrates some of the ways in which viewer/readers engaged with it over time, and their own desire to inscribe the unfolding story of Australia along with the explorers and cartographers.

The *General Map* is a product of many things Meek loved and could do well. Navigation, seamanship, cartography and surveying are the sciences and skills that allowed Europeans to reach Australia.[50] They are also the sciences Meek embraced and the skills he demonstrated throughout his life. He was an experienced seaman before he left England as a young man of twenty-three,[51] and many of his entrepreneurial enterprises in Victoria were maritime ones.[52] The *General Map* was an invaluable reference "not only to the colonists generally, but to seafaring men, [Meek] having had considerable nautical experience."[53] Comments by his contemporaries indicate that he was well known in the colonies for his maps during the 1850s.[54] In 1865 his proposed map of the colony, "after visiting every station", was expected to be "about 48 feet long by 28 feet wide!"[55] His map of Hampden County, "six feet square",[56] with a key in book form providing a broad range of local information, was advertised to local residents in 1866.[57] Meek also knew firsthand what it meant to explore. He records making an overland expedition "in the years '39 and '40 from Wellington Valley, in the Bathurst district, to Adelaide, in South Australia, following Major Mitchell's track."[58] He also contributed to other mapmakers; in 1865 his name appears on an official survey map of the Cape Otway District. His explorations of the Otways in 1864 and 1865 are documented extensively in his diaries, maps, sketches, and letters to the editor published in the *Warrnambool Examiner.* Meek was insistent there was gold to be found in the district and had given public lectures to that effect. The geologist Charles Wilkinson was asked to report on these claims and he determined that despite its appearance, it was not gold country – a finding Meek took some time and further exploring to accept, but eventually did so with good grace. Wilkinson reported that "Mr Meek and party have completely explored the district, to a degree really astonishing when it is considered that there were only three in the party."[59] The survey map accompanying Wilkinson's report notes that "several shafts were sunk about 2 Miles East of the Gellibrand by Messrs Allen and Meek's prospecting parties, in which gold was obtained, but not in paying quantity."[60]

Meek knew the value of good maps and how hard-won they were. As a proud colonial and a man of the Empire, he also knew their power to inspire.

[1] JB Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge and Power', in D Cosgrove and S Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays in the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp.277-310, quote p.282.
[2] C Ljundberg, 'Cartographic Strategies in Contemporary Fiction', in C Clüver, V Plesch and L Hoek (eds,), *Orientations: Space/Time/Image/Word*, Word & Image Interactions 5, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2005, pp.155-72.
[3] Meek's enthusiasm for photolithography has been discussed in the exhibition catalogue, pp.73, 75.
[4] Comment had been made in the press regarding the sometimes disappointing results of earlier lithographs, *Warrnambool Examiner,* 29 September 1865, p.2.
[5] Ongoing research is pointing to a revision of the date of this work to 1862, see Part 4, 'Re-Instating Mr Meek', pp.127-128 for a detailed argument.
[6] *Star* (Ballarat), 4 December 1862, p.2.
[7] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 January 1863, p.4.
[8] M Woods and S Helman, 'Introduction', *Mapping our World: Terra Incognita to Australia*, Exhibition Catalogue, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2013-14, pp.XV-XXIII, <https://www.nla.gov.au/content/mapping-our-world-catalogue>, accessed 4 May 2016.
[9] *Age* (Melbourne), 15 October 1862, p.3.
[10] JB Harley, 'The Map and the Development of the History of Cartography', in JB Harley and D Woodward (eds.), *The History of Cartography*, vol.1, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1987, pp.1-42, quote p.12, available online http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V1/Volume1.html, accessed 9 July 2016.
[11] http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/35634519?q&versionId=44353252, accessed 10 July 2016; see also TJ Maslen, *The Friend of Australia or A plan for Exploring the Interior and for Carrying on a Survey of the Whole Continent of Australia,* London, 1830.
[12] M Graves and E Rechniewski, 'Mapping Utopia: Cartography and Social Reform in 19th Century Australia', *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies,* 2012, vol.9, no.2, pp.1-20, https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/portal/article/view/2147, accessed 5 July 2016.
[13] J Vetsch, 'Considerations on the Political Geography and Geographical Nomenclature of Australia,' *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 1838, vol.8, pp.157–69.
[14] For a comprehensive discussion of Vetsch and Maslen see M Graves and E Rechniewski, op.cit.
[15] Ibid., p.2; 'Prospectus of the Royal Geographical Society', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 1831, vol.1, pp.vii-xii, quote p.vii, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1797654, accessed 8 July 2016.
[16] F Ferretti, 'Pioneers in the History of Cartography: the Geneva Map Collection of Élisée Reclus and Charles Perron', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2014, vol.43, pp.85-95.
[17] A discussion of Meek's cartographic design elements is given in the exhibition catalogue, pp.68-70.
[18] See for example: *Argus* (Melbourne), 5 September 1862 p.4; *Warrnambool Examiner,* 5 September 1862 p.2; *Age* (Melbourne), 6 September 1862 p.5; *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 8 September 1862 p.3; *Bendigo Advertiser,* 12 September 1852 p.3; *Warrnambool Examiner,* 7 October 1862 p.2; *Age,* 15 October 1862 p.3; *Warrnambool Examiner,* 17 October 1862 p.2; *Bendigo Advertiser,* 29 October 1862 p.3; *Star* (Ballarat), 4 December 1862 p.2; *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser,* 13 December 1862 supp. p.1; *Sydney Morning Herald,* 20 January 1863 p.4; *Empire* (Sydney), 21 January 1863 p.5; *Geelong Advertiser,* 26 January 1863 p.2; *Sydney Morning Herald,* 19 February 1863 p.13.
[19] *Warrnambool Examiner,* 17 October 1862, p.2.
[20] *Age* (Melbourne), 6 September 1862, p.5.
[21] *Empire* (Sydney), 21 January 1863, p.5, col.4. Note that Walker's expedition is omitted in the list. Meek's Hurculean labours were not rewarded financially; his struggle to make a living by his pen is discussed in the exhibition catalogue.
[22] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 February 1863, p.13.
[23] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 January 1863, p.4.
[24] M Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992.
[25] C Ljundberg, op.cit., p.165.
[26] Ibid., p.158.
[27] S Düchting, 'The Interaction of Art and Cartography in the Work of Simon Patterson and Susanne Weirich', in C Clüver, V Plesch and L Hoek (eds.), *Orientations: Space/Time/Image/Word*, 2005, op.cit., pp.173-182, quote pp.177-178.

[28] There were at least eighteen official boundary changes between the founding of NSW in 1788 and Federation in 1901, see DJ Taylor, *The States of a Nation: The Politics and Surveys of the Australian State Borders*, Department of Lands, Bathurst, New South Wales, 2006.
[29] D Day, *Claiming a Continent: A New History of Australia*, 4th edn., Harper Perennial, Sydney, 2005, p.141.
[30] P Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, Faber and Faber, London and Boston, 1987.
[31] M de Certeau, 'Walking in the City', *The Practice of Everyday Life*, SF Rendall (trans.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984, pp.91-110. C Ljundberg, op.cit., pp.161-162, draws on de Certeau's notion of walking and writing as spatial practices in which pedestrians write the text of the city and relates this to cartography.
[32] P Carter, op.cit., p.56. Carter's landmark work elaborates an important and thoughtful view on the exploration and settlement of the Australian continent.
[33] M Graves and E Rechniewski, op.cit., p.6.
[34] For example of the 375 postal towns in Victoria that Meek recorded on the *Map*, only 15% show Aboriginal-derived place names.
[35] M Graves and E Rechniewski, 'Mapping Utopia: Cartography and Social Reform in 19th Century Australia', *Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies,* 2012,vol.9, no.2, p.3, https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/portal/article/view/2147, accessed 5 July 2016.
[36] E Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, New York, 1994; M Heusser, 'Cultural Appropriation and National Identity. The Landscapes of Albert Bierstadt and James Fenimore Cooper', in M Heusser, M Hanoosh, E Haskell, L Hoek, D Scott, and P de Voogd, *On Verbal/Visual Representation*, Word and Image Interactions 4, L Hoek and P de Voogd (eds.), Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York, 2005, pp.151-159.
[37]G Huggan, *Territorial Disputes: Maps and Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1994, p.22; C Lundberg, op.cit., p.158.
[38] C Ljundberg, op.cit., p.160-161.
[39] S Düchting, op.cit., p.173.
[40] *Empire* (Sydney), 21 January 1863.
[41] RL Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, 1883, Heinemann, London, 1924, 'My First Book', p.xxxi; C Ljundberg, op.cit., p.163.
[42] S Düchting, op.cit., p.180.
[43] C Ljundberg, op.cit., p.161. Ljundberg's article gives a detailed account of "literary cartographers" and the value of maps in the creation of a narrative.
[44] AH Robinson and B Bartz Petchenik, *The Nature of Maps: Essays Toward Understanding Maps and Mapping*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1976, p.19; C Ljundberg, op.cit., p.165.
[45] C Ljundberg, op.cit., p.155.
[46] M Heusser, op.cit., p.156.
[47] Ibid.
[48] National Library of Australia, catalogue, http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/3550075, accessed 15 September 2013.
[49] The author/s and date/s of these additions are not known.
[50] M Woods and S Helman, op.cit., p.XX.
[51] "I settled in Geelong that year [1846] and … followed the occupation to which I was brought up in my youth, viz, a fisherman", JM Meek, *Fifty Years' Colonial Experience*, The "Press" Office, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1887, p.7. For details on Meek's early seafaring experience in England and in the colonies see the exhibition catalogue, pp.9, 17, 22, 68, 70.
[52] For discussions of Meek's maritime ventures see the exhibition catalogue, pp.15, 22, 68, 70, 71.
[53] *Warrnambool Examiner*, 5 September 1852, p.2.
[54] J Sadleir, *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer*, 1913, Penguin Colonial Facsimiles, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1973.
[55] 1463 x 853 cm. *Warrnambool Examiner*, 13 June 1865, p.2, exclamation mark in original.
[56] 183 x 183 cm.
[57] *Warrnambool Examiner*, 'Map of the County of Hampden', 15 May 1866, p.3.
[58] JM Meek, op.cit., p.6.
[59] *Warrnambool Examiner*, 20 December 1864, p.2.
[60] *Map of Part of the Counties of Polwarth and Heytesbury, Cape Otway District,* to accompany Mr Charles Wilkinson's Geological Report, Parliamentary paper Geological Survey of Victoria, 1864-5, No. 44, Alfred RC Selwyn, Director Geological Survey, 19 September 1865. Text in lower left quadrant.

ATLAS OF THE AUSTRALASIAN COLONIES: VICTORIAN PUBLIC ART

Figure 23. JM Meek, de Gruchy and Leigh, printer, *Atlas of the Australasian Colonies,* 1861, photolithograph, 205.7 x 120.4 cm, Art Gallery of Ballarat.

> Mr Meek [is] one of the renowned Wonders of the World, in consequence of the Atlas he has published.
>
> *Warrnambool Examiner*[1]

Meek's *Atlas* had celebrity status, even two years after he exhibited it in Melbourne's Victorian Exhibition, during October and November 1861, where it achieved a First Class Certificate,[2] and a year after its success at London's International Exhibition in 1862.[3] This work was widely acclaimed throughout the colonies[4] and among Meek's oeuvre is one that can perhaps best be described as a work of 'public art'.

A definition of what makes art public in the twenty-first century is somewhat elusive. Public art may be "meant for performance, for display in public venues, or concerned with public values."[5] Or it may be that "art's publicness rests in the quality and impact of its exchange with audiences … at its most public, art extends opportunities for community engagement, … it introduces social ideas but leaves room for the public to come to their own conclusions."[6] The notion that public art articulates something about its time and place is central to its role as "a form of collective community expression. Public art is a reflection of how we see the world — the artist's response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are."[7] But how does art come to be public? There is the interesting situation where an artwork unexpectedly gains public interest and exposure: "simple coincidence can trigger the process of canonization of … a work of art … while similar works do not attract any attention at all."[8] Changes in site or function affect the status of an artwork and, indeed, much of the Western European canon has become iconic through the passage of time and the movement of works among private collections and public art museums. Today, public art is no longer regarded as an art 'form', in part because of the difficulty of encompassing work such as street art, and material in electronic and social media that is often ephemeral in nature.

In Meek's world, however, there were clearer expectations about what constituted public art. Meek and his audience recognised and understood public art in terms of its message, size, medium, genre, location, and the intention of the artist or patron.[9] To discuss the *Atlas* as a public work, it is necessary to consider its aesthetics and its function in a mid-

nineteenth-century colonial milieu. Meek's audience were unequivocal in their admiration for his large tablets throughout many decades; to understand this it is important to consider not only the style and taste of the time, but also the way in which colonial society saw itself and its world expressed in these works.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Britain experienced an increasing secularism and a decline in church patronage,[10] and as a result public art tended to commemorate secular heroes in monumental and sculptural form. In Ballarat, for example, a prodigious number of public works were undertaken by philanthropists and the community, including monuments in the main street of the city, Sturt Street, that Meek would have been familiar with: the Burke and Wills Fountain 1867, Robert Burns 1867, James Galloway 1880, Thomas Moore 1889,[11] and Peter Lalor 1893. The works in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens included the gift of twelve classical Italian marble statues in 1884, the statuary pavilion in 1888, and the lions at the entrance in 1893. This pride in public decorative works continues to the present day.

Urban architecture was also an important public expression of the values and taste of the time. Notably, at the heart of the Empire, the Crystal Palace, built to house the Great Exhibition of 1851, "was, and always will be, … one of the great epoch-inaugurating buildings of history."[12] The Houses of Parliament in London[13] signaled a stylistic eclecticism and the use of past stylistic forms, in particular a historically oriented neo-Gothic and neo-Classical aesthetic;[14] other European examples include the National Gallery in London, the Paris Opera and Eiffel Tower, and the Capitol Building and Statue of Liberty in the United States of America. These styles were embraced in the colonies and predominated in the boom time of 1880s Ballarat when the city emerged in all its gold-built glory, producing an architectural legacy that still stands proudly.

Access to public art works, beyond architecture and monuments, was part of a process of democratisation in the nineteenth century.[15] The industrial revolution had given rise to a wealthy bourgeois class; the new abundance (for some), had the paradoxical effect of art becoming more public, particularly in the rise of art museums, and at the same time, more private, as art could be increasingly consumed and viewed in "domestic privacy"[16] by those who could afford it, and by the masses through the availability of cheap prints. In the latter part of Meek's career, public art became accessible in art galleries. "One of the

cardinal principles of the mid-century [was] that public amusement should be combined with education. Pleasure with instruction what was the masses needed."[17] A good example is the establishment of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery Association in 1884, and the opening of the existing gallery building in 1890, a project driven by philanthropist James Oddie. He and other founding fathers were men who had made their fortunes by servicing the gold industry and contributed generously to the community from of a sense of civic responsibility and pride, and from strongly held liberal values that opportunities for personal improvement should be available to all – exposure to fine art was seen as such an opportunity,[18] "an educating, socializing and civilizing force in society."[19]

At the time Meek produced his *Atlas* in 1861, the public gallery in Ballarat was still thirty years away, but there was a public library in Melbourne. Charles La Trobe, Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, and Sir Redmond Barry, Solicitor-General, had been influential in establishing this significant institution and making it available to all Victorians, with the library opened in 1856 and the first reading room in 1859. Barry commissioned Meek to produce three public works for permanent display in 1860, the appointment affirming a high regard for Meek's skill.[20] Prior to this commission, Meek had made his mark in Melbourne with an illustrated historical tablet of Victoria that was exhibited to considerable acclaim.[21] He had also been commissioned to produce a testimonial for a prominent citizen,[22] and in 1856 he had presented his first recorded public work, in praise of Warrnambool, to the local Mechanics' Institute.[23] He clearly had experience in producing art for public consumption by the time he created the *Atlas*. There are several factors that bear on the work's positioning as public art; these factors individually may not be definitive, but in combination they locate the *Atlas* such that Meek's audience would have understood and embraced it as public in nature and function.

There is no doubt that Meek intended the work to have a very public profile from the outset. Even as the *Tablet of Victoria* was being reviewed in the press, previews of the *Atlas* appeared, and they were unequivocal. "We learn that [Meek] is engaged on a work which he intends for Exhibition, a work which shall do credit to the colony."[24] Meek's entrepreneurial eye would also have recognised the market opportunity to provide a large scale Atlas afforded by the heroic expedition of Burke and Wills. The explorers departed Melbourne in August 1860 and by the time the Atlas was completed late the following year, several rescue expeditions had been mounted and popular feeling was running high

as to the fate of the men.[25] The same circumstance was certainly true in the case of the *General Map*, which followed the *Atlas*, and specifically laid out the routes of all major expeditions of the continent to that date.[26]

Meek sought civic support for the work. He presented it to the Fitzroy Municipal Council at a ceremony over which the Municipal chairman resided, in the presence of various dignitaries, with suitably congratulatory speeches and resolutions, recommending the work "to the favourable consideration of the citizens" and comparing its impact with the pyramid of gold, also due to go on display in London,[27] a comparison that was drawn more than once.[28] The Fitzroy Council duly handed the work over to the Exhibition Commissioners and it was "placed in the centre aisle, at the commencement of the additional building"[29] (equivalent to hanging 'on the line'), where "Mr. Meek's wonderful tablet, and its extraordinary carved wooden frame, attracted much attention, and are worthy of more."[30]

Meek gave the work an official face by placing an image of Britannia at the apex, Queen Victoria's royal coat of arms centred under the map of Australasia, the armorial bearings of the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Barkly, lower centre, and by reproducing the coat of arms of various municipalities along the lower border.[31] Meek did not claim official patronage, nor did he specifically dedicate the *Atlas*, two strategies he employed in later works, but these devices lent the work authority and positioned it as a public piece, and Meek's audience would have read it as such.

Attracting business partnerships and encouraging immigration were of vital concern to the colonial economies as businesses sought to expand and export. Meek had these commercial issues firmly in sight in producing the *Atlas* and the press seized on its potential. Reports predicted the *Atlas* would enhance the public image of the colonies and provide a fillip to immigration; undoubtedly it would "in a great degree increase the knowledge of the British public, … thereby advance the best interests of Australia",[32] and "prove a valuable auxiliary to emigration."[33] The press also advocated that Meek should be appointed to a Victorian Government scheme to send immigration lecturers to England to promote colonial interests.[34]

In Victorian public art, size mattered. Meek's original pen and ink drawing was identified in the catalogue entry of the Victorian Exhibition as "9ft. 3in. x 6ft. 3in."[35] Prior to the sending of the *Atlas* to London, it was the original work that went on display to the public and which Meek took on tour to attract subscribers; it must have been an amazing object to experience first-hand.[36] The photolithographed *Atlas* measures 205.7 x 120.4 cm. Even the smaller print commanded respect: "The sheet to be seen at Mr Ford's is above six feet in length, one third of the size of the original,[37] having been copied by the new photo-lithographic process."[38] The combination of the great size of the object and the minute calligraphy would have been a delight to a Victorian audience.

While the Victorians' zeal for public education has been noted, many contemporary thinkers were aware that providing instruction did not constitute effective education. Rather, the view formed that "the intrinsic importance of factual knowledge could only be fruitful if fertilized by the imagination."[39] In this sense, Meek's viewers would have appreciated the "beauty of fitness" [40] of the *Atlas* in providing both. Moreover, the involvement of cutting-edge technology – the inventor of the photo-lithographic process, John Walter Osborne, also won a gold medal in London in 1862[41] – drew regular press comment and added to the educational and intellectual value of the work, as well as enhancing its glamour and public profile.

If further argument were needed about the nature of the *Atlas* as public art, Meek proclaimed it himself: he inscribed the work 'Pro Bono Publico',[42] declaring it to be not commissioned, not for personal gain, and for the public good. Of course, Meek's situation was not so unambiguous. He took the *Atlas* on tour, seeking subscribers to fund the photolithography, and he undoubtedly aimed to make a profit. But while Meek needed to make a living, there is no question he had high ideals and great ideas for 'the public good' and that genuinely civic-minded values underpinned his entrepreneurial ventures, artistic and otherwise, to which his lectures, diaries, letters and newspaper items testify. Most of Meek's ventures did not bring him "the success he deserves",[43] but his love of the colonies and his determination to contribute to society are not in doubt.

If art's publicness is about its resonance with the public as Cher Krause Knight has suggested,[44] then Meek's *Atlas* seems perfectly calibrated to its time, place and audience. The Victorian press was not shy about voicing an opinion where it judged character, taste

or good sense and found them lacking. Issues concerning the businessman whom Meek appointed as agent for his *Atlas* drew harsh words at the time.[45] Other commercial ventures by Meek such as his attempt to bring in large-scale fish netting in the Hopkins River[46] were criticised. But his art works were uncontroversial, they received consistently enthusiastic reviews, without exception, for forty years. The *Atlas* reflected how Meek's public saw, or wanted to see, their world, it confirmed that world for them in a satisfying way, and it was instrumental in maintaining the public values and aspirations that it embodied. Works of public art "claim cultural significance"[47] and "build cultural memory",[48] and the *Atlas* worked to do both. To a community that was a world away from its roots, stigmatised by transportation, in the throes of societal upheaval, and mesmerised by the potential of wealth and opportunity, its public art was crucial in creating an image of bounty and order, possibility and control; this functioned to reassure the population, it persuaded those 'at home', that this was, indeed, a civilised society, and it was integral in the process of creating an identity for a diverse and dislocated group of people. It fashioned a public face in which they could believe and of which they could be proud.

[1] *Warrnambool Examiner*, 26 February 1864, p.3.
[2] WH Archer et al., *Catalogue of the Victorian Exhibition 1861*, John Ferres, Government Printer, 1861, p.273, prize winners, no.577, 'Meek, J.M., 131 Johnston-street, Fitzroy. Pen-and-ink Drawing of the Map of Australia. Des.' The award is also printed on the later version of the *Atlas* 1862, lower right.
[3] A gold medal award was reported in the local press, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 February 1863, p.13.
[4] The *Atlas* and the *Chronological Tree of New Zealand History* 1877 are the two most extensively reported in the press of all Meek's works. *Atlas* reports include:
1861: *Argus* (Melbourne) 5 April, p.4; *Cornwall Chronicle* (Launceston) 22 May p.4; *Argus* 23 July p.7; *Argus* 25 July p.5; *Star* (Ballarat) 26 July supp p.1; *Mercury* (Hobart) 27 September p.2; *Argus* 23 October p.4; *Geelong Advertiser* 24 October p.2; *Empire* (Sydney) 28 October p.8; *South Australian Register* 5 November p.2; *Adelaide Observer* 9 November p.1; *Age* (Melbourne) 16 November p.4; *Star* 18 November p.1; *Age* 19 November p.5; *Age* 22 November p.5; *Argus* 22 November p.4; *Bendigo Advertiser* 2 December p.3; *Inquirer and Commercial News* (Perth) 4 December, p.3; *Argus* 6 December p.8; *Age* 6 December p.1; *Age* 9 December p.5; *Argus* 24 December p.5; *Warrnambool Examiner* 27 December, pp.2, 3; **1862**: *Geelong Advertiser* 11 January p.2; *Warrnambool Examiner* 24 January p.2; *Portland Guardian and Normanby General Advertiser* 11 February p.4; *Argus* 18 February p.5; *Launceston Examiner* 20 February p.5; *Portland Guardian and Normanby General Advertiser* 22 February p.4; *Launceston Examiner* 27 February p.6; *Warrnambool Examiner* (from *Argus*) 28 February, p.3; *Launceston Examiner* 1 March p.5; *Cornwall Chronicle* 1 March p.4; *Bendigo Advertiser* (from *Herald*) 23 July p.2; *Argus* 24 July p.4; *Argus* 5 September p.4; *Bendigo Advertiser* 16 December p.1; *Age* 18 December 1862 p.7; *Age* 27 December 'A Correction, To The Editor Of The Age' p.6;
1863: *Sydney Morning Herald* 20 January p.4; *Empire* 21 January p.5; *Geelong Advertiser* 26 January p.2; *Sydney Morning Herald* 19 February p.13; *Argus* 14 November p.8;
1864: *Warrnambool Examiner* 26 February p.3; **1865**: *Argus* 27 May, p.4 col.7 - p.5 col.1;
1875: *Daily Southern Cross* (NZ) 27 March, p.2; *Thames Star* (NZ) 1 September p.2.
[5] R McMullen, *The Aesthetics of Abundance*, Pall Mall Press, London, 1968, p.25.
[6] C Krause Knight, *Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2008, p.iv.
[7] The Association for Public Art, http://associationforpublicart.org/public-art-gateway/what-is-public-art/, accessed 6 December 2015.
[8] A Ochsner and L Bezzola Lambert (eds.), *Moment to Monument: The Making and Unmaking of Cultural Significance*, transcript Verlag, 2009, ProQuest Ebook Central, p.9, pdf online, accessed 26 July 2016.
[9] J Steegman, *Victorian Taste*, National Trust Classics, Century Hutchison Australia Pty Ltd, 1987 provides a detailed analysis of art and architecture 1830-1870.
[10] J Steegman, op.cit., also notes "a total absence of official Royal or State patronage" of the arts in the eighteenth century but observes that this was well compensated for by "the direct or invisible authority of a succession of individuals", p.139. State patronage gradually strengthened in the nineteenth century, including support for industrial art, with the Government School of Design opening in 1937, culminating in the Great Exhibition of 1851, pp.140-142.
[11] Note that the sculptor was the young artist George Grant who took up Meek's images of the First House in Ballarat in the 1890s, see the exhibition catalogue, pp.11, 54, 56.
[12] J Steegman, op.cit., p.228.
[13] This architectural influence fired Meek's imagination and is discussed in the essay '*Past and Present of Ballarat*: Creating Empire and Nation', p.70.
[14] J Steegman, op.cit., describes the lack of accepted standard, and the "War of the Styles" in the architecture of 1830-1850, chapter V.
[15] C Whitehead, *The Public Art Museum in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005.
[16] R McMullen, op.cit., p.25.
[17] J Steegman, op.cit., pp. 230-231.
[18] See the exhibition catalogue pp.26, 28, 60, 77 n.53, 80 n.14 for comment on Oddie and other influential settlers; also the works of A Beggs Sunter.
[19] C Whitehead, op.cit., p.xiii.
[20] The triptych of works, *Habeas Corpus, Magna Charta*, and *Petition and Bill of Rights* 1860 is discussed in the exhibition catalogue, p.43.
[21] *Tablet of Victoria* (also known as *Advance Victoria*), discussed in the exhibition catalogue, p.78 n.10, was first reported in Melbourne in 1860, *Argus*: 27 March, p.4; 28 March, p.5; 2 April, p.5; 5 April, p.4. There were earlier reports in the regional press.

[22] *Testimonial for William Fairfax*, April 1860, is discussed in the exhibition catalogue, p.43.
[23] *Warrnambool Tablet,* reported in the *Warrnambool Examiner*, 11 November 1856, p.2.
[24] *Argus*, 5 April 1861, p.4. See also *Cornwall Chronicle*, 22 May 1861, p.4, "Mr. Meek is now engaged in the execution of a work of art on a large scale, comprising maps of the whole of the Australian colonies, including Tasmania, with historical, descriptive, and statistical information. It is, when completed, to be forwarded to the Great Exhibition of 1862"; also *Mercury*, 27 September 1861, p.2.
[25] For an overview of the expedition, see for example T Bonyhady, *Burke and Wills: from Melbourne to Myth*, David Ell Press, Balmain NSW, 1991; the research archive, http://www.burkeandwills.net.au/index.php , accessed 4 May 2016; and for an extensive bibliography, see The Burke and Wills Historical Society, http://www.burkeandwills.org , accessed 4 May 2016.
[26] A detailed discussion of Meek's timing in producing the *General Map* is given in Part 4, 'Re-Instating Mr Meek', pp.127-128.
[27] *Age*, 19 November 1861, p.5.
[28] *Argus*, 22 November 1861, p.4.
[29] *Age*, 22 November 1861, p.5.
[30] *Bendigo Advertiser*, 2 December 1861, p.3.
[31] Meek took the work to various districts, sought subscribers by offering advertising space at the bottom of the work, and included the coat of arms of each local town. *Warrnambool Examiner*, 24 January 1862, p.2.
[32] *Geelong Advertiser*, 11 January 1862, p.2.
[33] *Warrnambool Examiner*, 24 January 1862, p.2.
[34] *Portland Guardian and Normanby General Advertiser*, 11 February 1862, p.4. While there are multiple press references to Meek's intention to take the work to London, no evidence has been found that he did so and later reports refer to the work being 'sent' rather than 'taken'. There is no doubt that had Meek been on a tour of Britain, he would have lectured and written on his experience when he returned: no such reports have been found.
[35] 280 x 190 cm; *Catalogue of the Victorian Exhibition 1861*, op.cit.
[36] No doubt a similar encounter to that of seeing the original *Chronological Tree of New Zealand History* 1877, a highlight described in the exhibition catalogue, p.33.
[37] Presumably one third the size in area, not in scale.
[38] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 February 1863, p.13.
[39] J Steegman, op.cit., pp.233-234.
[40] Ibid., p.232.
[41] *International Exhibition 1862, Medals and Honourable Mentions Awarded by the International Jurors*, Eyre and Spottiswoode printers, London, 1862, p.432.
[42] Decorative inset, lower left border.
[43] *Warrnambool Examiner*, 26 February 1864, p.3. The work's lack of financial success had also been noted earlier in a review of the *General Map*, *Argus*, 5 September 1862, p.4.
[44] C Krause Knight, op.cit., p.ix.
[45] A Mr Bottomley established an Art Union lottery for some of Meek's works including the *Atlas* and the press was scathing in its suggestions that Bottomley was, if not running a scam, at least making excessive profits at the expense of ticket holders, *Age*, 18 December 1862, p.7. James Thomson who had bought the copyright for the *Atlas* from Meek was keen to dissociate himself from Bottomley the following week, *Age*, 27 December 1862, p.6. Meek's business decisions were not always wisely made nor his associates well chosen.
[46] A lengthy article in the *Warrnambool Examiner*, 25 August 1868, p.2 describes a heated public meeting in which, eventually, Meek was refused the floor, and many attendees left the hall.
[47] A Ochsner and L Bezzola Lambert, op.cit., p.12.
[48] Ibid., p.15.

THE TREE MOTIF

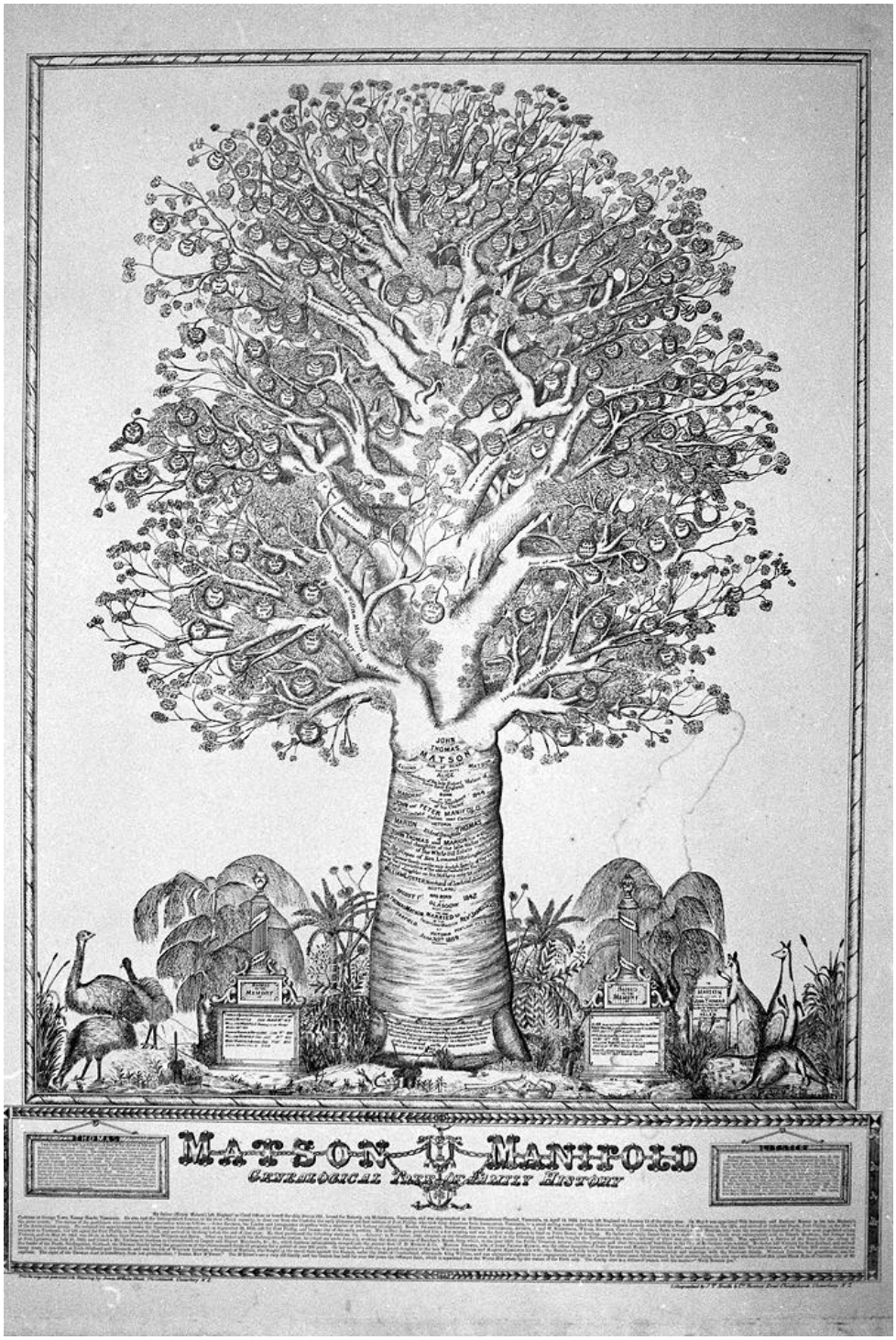


Figure 24. JM Meek, JT Smith & Co, printer, *Matson Manifold Genealogical Tree of Family History,* c.1880, lithograph, 86 x 66 cm, Canterbury Museum, New Zealand.

> But those who follow after God in simple truth
> Shall be like a tree planted by the river side
> Whose roots are full of grace, supplied by God himself,
> Which bringeth forth the fruits of love, joy, temperance and peace,
> Goodness and meekness, truth and hope combined,
> With charity in numbers countless.
>
> JM Meek, *On Life and Death*[1]

Meek greatly admired trees. This exploration of his works would be incomplete, indeed deficient, without some comment on the recurring tree motif. Meek harnesses the tree image for multiple purposes: it provides a platform for biblical texts; it illustrates the vital growth and branching of family lineages; it provides a symbol of political and social injustice; and it showcases the progress of events over time in the history of nascent countries. In short, Meek fully exploits the long history of tree iconography in visual and verbal traditions. Six of his major works employ the tree as the central metaphor[2] and it reoccurs across his oeuvre from the early Police Camp sketch in 1852 to his political Gum-Tree work in 1895. It can also be argued that his use of neo-Gothic pillars, for example in the Atlas and the Ballarat history tablet, are a stylised tree image.

Metaphor is a device in which one thing is conceived as representing another, "the integration of two elements on the basis of both difference and similarity defin[ing] the structure of metaphor."[3] This structure holds an inherent power to bridge different domains[4] so that Meek sees history as a tree, a family as a tree, a nation as a tree. Each of the two elements is different but by conflating them, the apprehension of an idea is enhanced and extended in a poetic way, poetic because both elements "define the enigmatic 'thing' A=A and yet do not grasp it entirely."[5] In other words, "the characteristic of the metaphor is precisely that it is only partially consistent with the subject to which it refers",[6] hence its poetic force as the mind works to marry the two elements.

Simon Schama, in his detailed work on the power of landscape in the human imagination, makes the point that it is easy to overlook the deep resonance of the tree metaphor in the human psyche.

> Beneath the commonplace is a long, rich, and significant history of associations between the primitive grove and its tree idolatry, and the forms of Gothic architecture. The evolution from Nordic tree worship through the Christian iconography of the Tree of Life and the wooden cross to images like Caspar David Friedrich's explicit association between the evergreen fir and the architecture of resurrection may seem esoteric. But in fact it goes directly to the heart of one of our most powerful yearnings: the craving to find in nature a consolation for our mortality. It is why groves of trees, with their annual promise of spring awakening, are thought to be a fitting décor for our earthly remains. So the mystery behind this commonplace turns out to be eloquent on the deepest relationships between natural form and human design.[7]

It would be erroneous to dismiss Meek's trees solely as a pragmatic device, an artistic conceit or one man's relentless obsession. Instead, as Schama has signaled, the tree image goes to the very heart and soul of the human experience. It is this core affinity that Meek draws on in his works and that gives them their enduring appeal.

Meek did not share the beliefs of the ancient pagan world in which plant motifs have their origins, but he did share the artistic vocabulary that had developed over centuries, arising from early beliefs about the connection between the natural and the spiritual worlds. As pagan rituals commingled with Christian rites, these images were gradually absorbed into the new religion. Foliate imagery was a sign of prosperity to the Romans and was adopted and adapted by the Christian tradition as a sign of abundance, God's providence. This imagery is in evidence from the third and fourth centuries; by the early eighth to tenth centuries its use was extensive. To the medieval mind, the material world, particularly nature, served as a sign of divine truth and a higher reality, culminating in the Christian art, architecture and literature of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries in which vegetal imagery was lavish, "establishing a symbolic language that would communicate complex and profound theological concepts for centuries to come."[8]

The tree image appeals to a pre-understanding of its significance to life, in both human and divine realms. Artists' use of symbols is not arbitrary and trees "possess a peculiar appropriateness arising from their historical significance and their physical features."[9] In form, the tree reflects man in his own image: a central trunk with a crown or head and symmetrical branches or arms. The tree has long been valued for its shelter, its fruits, seeds and leaves, its bark and timber, its properties to heat and heal, as well as to harm, its use to gain a vantage point, and to show where life-giving water must flow.[10] In particular, the tree's generative and regenerative power has captivated the human imagination: it grows, becomes old, and renews itself; destroyed, it can sprout again.

These are potent attributes, beyond the possibilities of the human condition, and unsurprisingly they became enmeshed with ideas of a spiritual domain. The Tree of Life is an archetype that appears throughout the world, recorded in all cultures and religious and philosophical traditions. Moreover, almost all 'primitive' religions conceived of the tree as holy[11] and arboreal symbolism was ubiquitous as a sign of renewal. In the East, it manifested in the forms of palm, olive and fig trees, and cedar and cypress. The apple, oak, ash, holly and yew were significant in the west.[12]

> Tree cults were everywhere in barbarian Europe, from the Celtic shores of the Atlantic in Ireland and Brittany, and Nordic Scandinavia, all the way through to the Balkans in the southeast and Lithuania on the Baltic; [in the latter] it is still possible to find startling "graveyards" where, instead of conventional crosses, wooden totems, their forms unaltered from paganism, crowd together in antic disorder.[13]

Meek's overtly religious work, *The Christian's Keepsake* 1880, 1893, features two trees, symmetrically placed. This dual design provides the infrastructure from which the mandorla of Christ framed in the wreath of laurel is suspended. The twin trees have special resonance, recalling the Edenic Tree of Life, and Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil from which the fatal fruit was taken. "And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil."[14] But the tree emblem develops further. The theologised Tree of Life over time combined with the cult of the Cross to create a "genuinely independent Christian" layer of meaning[15] in which the tree stands for the cross of the crucifixion, and for Christ's perseverance with humanity after the fall. Over the centuries, the 'Tree Cross' became a 'Living Cross' from which new foliage sprouted, embodying the desire for renewal, for immortality. "The idea conveyed is that the wood of the Cross is a symbolic Tree of Life through the redemption of sin and promise of resurrection given to man by the sacrifice of Christ."[16] The image of a 'Verdant Cross' dates from at least the fourth century AD when the emperor Theodosius I placed a gold and jeweled cross in the form of a thriving plant in the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem.[17] Both Simon Schama and Kirsten Nielsen have argued that this image has continued to flourish because it is "singularly suitable for communicating important theological views."[18] Clearly, this tradition of nature emblems and tree iconography underpins Meek's embrace of the tree as an artistic device. The literature on the subject of nature symbolism is extensive and detailed, the pertinent point being that its use is as ancient as the story of humankind and its adaptation for the Christian story is just one of its many manifestations.[19]

The tree is positioned centrally in Meek's two history works, *Chronological Tree of Victorian History* 1873 and *Chronological Tree of New Zealand History* 1877, a design feature that works practically as well as metaphorically. It provides a striking design element, in and on which Meek can write miniature text, and it operates metaphorically by virtue of the strength of the associations that have attended the tree image throughout human history. In the history tablets, Meek links the tree and the nascent nation. His writing on the bole of the tree is a form of blazing: he leaves marks that blaze the trail, an action well understood by the early pioneers in Australia and New Zealand. The Dig Tree enshrines a legendary event in Australia's history, that of the Burke and Wills expedition. There are many historical events that have profound associations with the tree. When the new queen of England, Elizabeth I, was advised at Hatfield in 1558 that she had ascended the throne, the oak under which she was sitting is recounted as a key image in the story. Meek's trees evoke associations of recent and ancient events, lending a sense of heritage to the story of two nations that were, in reality, newly born from a European perspective.

The beautiful drawing of the New Zealand kauri in *Matson Manifold Genealogical Tree of Family History* c.1880 also derives from a long and distinguished genealogical tradition. The earliest known form of Christian ancestral tree is thought to be the Tree of Jesse portrayed in an eleventh century illuminated manuscript.[20] This tree was widely copied and developed over centuries, and was also rendered in stained glass, for example in Chartres Cathedral c.1140. It shows Christ's ancestral line, the House of David (Jesse was King David's father), in the form of a tree, as a schematic representation of a genealogy. The Biblical, verbal origin of the image is clear: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."[21] Typically, the image presents the prone figure of Jesse with a vine or tree issuing from his navel or side, ascending to Mary and ultimately to Christ at the apex of the image, rising from the earthly to the divine. The vine spreads as it climbs, and the branches are embellished with foliate imagery on which Christ's ancestors are depicted. Meek's tree issues from the earth, not from the ribs or loins of a man, and the record of lineage descends the bole of the tree.[22] However, Meek's use of the branches and foliage to record the offspring is very similar. In conception, the Tree of Jesse is an ancestor of Meek's family tree.

The urge to portray information diagrammatically is a fundamental aspect of human communication. Recent research into a Florentine diagram that presents a genealogy from

Adam to Christ could be older than the Tree of Jesse, possibly dating from as early as the fifth century.[23] This stemma, about two metres wide, is viewed left to right, the same directional tracking as Latin script, and represents a family lineage identifying about five hundred and forty biblical and historical names, each recorded in a roundel, and all connected by lines: a node-and-link diagram recognisable to a modern viewer as an 'infographic'.[24] Meek would have been completely comfortable with the size of the Florentine scroll, and his one hundred and sixty-eight 'fruits' hanging in the foliage of the Matson Manifold family tree, each recording a birth, would be equally at home in a medieval rendering. But Meek preferred his families upright, and the minimal, stylised stemma was not consistent with high Victorian taste. He took time and pleasure in depicting the visual beauty and variety of trees, natural, genealogical and historical.

The strength of the tree motif in the political work *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* 1895 evidences the versatility of metaphor when an old image is applied in a new way. The powerful contrast of the trees, one alive, one dead, activates elements of meaning that bring home the strength of Meek's message. Rachel Hostetter Smith offers a framework for explaining how "a traditional image set in an unexpected context causes the hearers [viewers] to see with new eyes, not only their own situation but also the vine [tree]. They receive new information in both domains that converge in the image."[25] Meek harnesses the two images, not to give an accepted view of the government's actions, but rather to persuade the public to his view. "An imagery's intention is to change the hearer's [viewer's] attitude to the world."[26] The degree of success of the image therefore depends on how strongly it elicits viewer involvement, "whether it creates participation."[27] For the viewer to be convinced by the image s/he must collaborate with it and complete it. The two contrasting trees are visually compelling and echo a history of dead-and-alive tree imagery dating from the Middle Ages. Initially, death and re-birth were portrayed as a single conceit: the burning bush of Moses that is never consumed; the saint's staff that comes to life when planted; the destruction of venerated trees that regenerate from cuttings. But as religious divisions in Christian Europe widened, so imagery became oppositional: "The Old and New Testaments; the synagogue and the church; sin and salvation; Satan and Christ; death and life", and this conflict was reflected in art.[28] Meek's two trees are incompatible, there is no re-birth suggested here, rather the fatal hand of a government that has failed in its duty of care.

The lamentations of Meek's gum tree also have a distinguished forebear. *The Dream of the Rood*, an Anglo-Saxon work, is one of the earliest surviving Christian poems. The central notion is that the Cross shares in Christ's crucifixion, both are nailed and tortured, and they become unified in their perseverance to suffer all for the sake of humanity. The tree bemoans its role in the suffering and death of the Son of God.

> They pierced me with dark nails;
> the scars can still be clearly seen on me,
> The open wounds of malice…
> They reviled us both together.
> I was made wet all over with the blood
> Which poured from his side…
> And I underwent
> Full many a dire experience on that hill.[29]

The close parallels with the Ballarat Camp Tree deploring its role in the persecution of the diggers (and ultimately the death of many at the Eureka uprising) are evident.

There is another political connection between taxes and trees that resonates with that drawn by Meek. On 14 August 1765 a protest crowd gathered under a large elm tree in the heart of Boston. The Stamp Act of 1765 imposed by the British government taxed printed materials including newspapers, pamphlets, advertisements, legal documents and playing cards. The populace saw this as a violation of their rights as Englishmen, as an issue regarding who had the authority to levy taxes, and as a restriction on freedom of speech and information.[30] This act was the beginning of public defiance against the British Crown from which the American Revolution arose some ten years later. The 'Liberty Tree' became identified with the resistance movement and was cut down by the British, a symbolic act that only deepened the conflict. The tree became an emblem of freedom, and flags bearing its image were commonly flown during the Revolution. Over time a stylised representation of the Liberty Tree emerged in the form of Liberty Poles and these were erected in many of the colonies in commemoration of the original tree.[31] They functioned as a symbol of independence and of the people prevailing against an unjust government – the same story that Meek's trees enshrine a century later.

The representation of trees in a modified form, such as the Liberty Poles, is also seen in architectural elements, for example, in *Atlas of the Australasian Colonies* 1861, *Chronological Tree of New Zealand History* 1877, and *Past and Present of Ballarat* 1893. These works feature large, ornate pillars that lend strength, symmetry and

definition to the works and arguably function as stylised trees. There is certainly a long history of the pillar/tree as a visual and verbal metaphor. The Cathedral of Orvieto, built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, has a fine façade with reliefs created by Lorenzo Maitani, Sienese sculptor. Hostetter Smith has made a careful study of the façade which features four pillars each decorated with an espaliered vine and generative foliate imagery.[32] These pillars bear the vines and carry the weight of history.[33] In the Orvieto architecture the pillars serve to present aspects of the biblical narrative in tree form. Similarly, Nielsen contends that the two pillars at the entrance to Solomon's temple, Jachin and Boaz,[34] "must be seen as stylised trees",[35] and the association between gothic architecture and ancient tree worship has been noted above. Meek's *Atlas*, his New Zealand history tree, and his Ballarat history tablet demonstrate this affinity of the architectural with the arboreal. In all three works, powerful and stately pillars flank each side. The immediately recognisable Victorian Gothic Revival style, particularly as it referenced the seat of imperial government, has been discussed. What is also at work in these images (and in the architecture) is an older, deeper reference to the attributes of the tree. Meek's pillar/trees are blazed with seemingly indisputable histories, and create echoes, far back in the viewer's mind, of protection and abundance, of generativity and renewal, of authority and power.

It is worth noting that in Ballarat, Victoria and New Zealand, Meek would have encountered trees of magnificent stature. He recorded breathtaking specimens in his exploration of the Victorian Otway Ranges[36] and some of the most ancient trees alive are to be found in the forests of New Zealand.

Figure 25. *Agathis australis*, commonly known by its Māori name kauri, web image.

Meek would certainly have encountered some outstanding kauris. For example, Te Matua Ngahere, ‘Father of the Forest’, boasts a girth of over 16m and is estimated to be between 2000 and 4000 years old. Tane Mahuta, ‘Lord of the Forest’, is 51m in height. Both trees are now protected in the Waipoua State Forest in Northland. Whether Meek saw these particular specimens is not known as diairies from his years in New Zealand have not survived, but as an intrepid traveller and a keen explorer, he would have reveled in the beauty of the ancient forests.

In Ballarat, a pre-colonial gum tree survives that was recorded at Yuille's Swamp (now Lake Wendouree) in the 1850s.[37] Meek would have fished in the swamp in his goldfield days and the tree would have graced the Lake environs on his return in the 1890s, as it does today.

Figure 26. *Eucalyptus yarraensis*, Carlton Street, Lake Wendouree, Ballarat, photograph Lorraine Powell, 2016.[38]

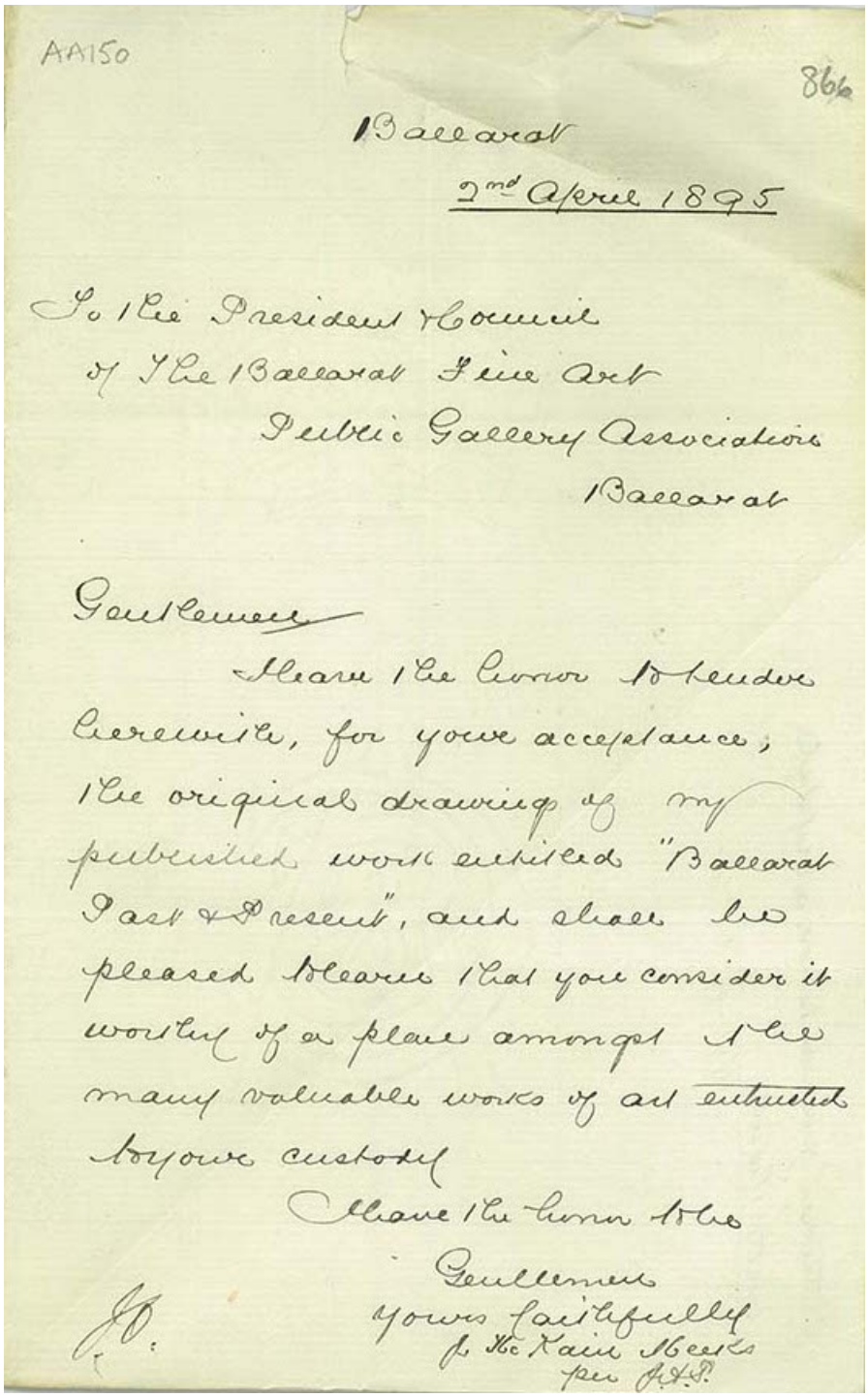
Meek's love of trees and his trademark deployment of them, both individually and as stylised design elements, are part of a tradition that began with humankind's capacity to reflect on its surroundings. Vegetal imagery is easily overlooked, it can be too readily dismissed as decoration, as "commonplace".[39] But Hostetter Smith, like Schama, Nielsen and others, insists on its core significance. "What has been widely viewed as embellishment or filler is in actuality imagery laden with deep symbolism and intended meaning. What might be perceived as visual marginalia is central to the primary text."[40] Meek's use of the tree is profound and its symbolic meaning is fundamental to his purpose in the works.

[1] JM Meek, *On Life and Death*, Field, printer, Albert Street, Auckland, c.1874-75, final page.
[2] *Allegorical Tree* 1868; *Chronological Tree of Victorian History* 1873; *Chronological Tree of New Zealand History* 1877; *Matson Manifold Genealogical Tree of Family History* c.1880; *The Christian's Keepsake* 1880, 1893; *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* 1893. *Police Camp Ballarat* 1852 featuring the notorious Camp Tree is not a major work but is of historical significance and Meek re-draws and re-uses it in the 1890s.
[3] H Caviola, 'The Rhetoric of Interdisciplinarity', in M Heusser, M Hannoosh, L Hoek, C Schoell-Glass, and D Scott (eds.), *Text and Visuality,* Word and Image Interactions 3, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 1999, p.47.
[4] M Black, *Models and Metaphors: Essays in Language and Philosophy*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1962.
[5] H Caviola, op.cit., p.47.
[6] K Nielsen, *There is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, England, 1989, pp.29-30.
[7] S Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, HarperCollins, London, 1995, pp.14-15.
[8] R Hostetter Smith, 'Marginalia or Eschatological Iconography? Providence and Plenitude in the Imagery of Abundance at Orvieto Cathedral', in J Romaine and L Stratford (eds.), *ReVisioning: Critical Methods of Seeing Christianity in the History of Art*, Lutterworth, Cambridge, UK, 2013, pp.95-113, quote p.100.
[9] D Davies, 'The Evocative Symbolism of Trees' in D Cosgrove and S Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, pp.32-42, quote, p.33.
[10] The effect of these properties has engaged theorists such as Jay Appleton who proposed the prospect-refuge theory of human aesthetics which suggests that innate desires for opportunity (prospect) and safety (refuge) give rise to enduring elements in art. J Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape*, rev.edn., Wiley, Hoboken, NJ, 1975, 1996.
[11] K Nielsen, op.cit., p.79.
[12] See S Schama, op.cit., p.218 for an interesting list of holy trees across cultures.
[13] S Schama, op.cit., pp.215-216.
[14] King James Bible, Genesis 2:9; S Schama, op.cit., p.219; V della Dora, *Landscape, Nature, and the Sacred in Byzantium*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, p.95.
[15] S Schama, op.cit., p.218.
[16] E Lansing Smith, *The Hero Journey in Literature: Parables of Poesis*, University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, USA and London, 1997, p.440.
[17] Ibid.; S Schama, op.cit., p.214. Note that Schama speculates that the verdant tree image may be pagan in origin, deriving from the fecund date palm first cultivated in Sumeria and Mesopotamia.
[18] K Nielsen, op.cit., p.71; S Schama, op.cit., p.219 argues the same point.
[19] For discussions of nature symbolism in a variety of contexts see for example: JD Archibald, *Aristotle's Ladder, Darwin's Tree: The Evolution of Visual Metaphors for Biological Order,* Columbia University Press, New York, 2014; M Lima, *The Book of Trees: Visualizing Branches of Knowledge*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2014; J Campbell, BD Moyers, and BS Flowers, *The Power of Myth*, Anchor Books, New York, 1991; MI Finley, *Aspects of Antiquity: Discoveries and Controversies*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, England, 1977; V Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1967; CJ Jung (ed.), *Man and His Symbols*, Anchor Press Doubleday, New York, 1964; JG Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, Macmillan, London, 1957.
[20] Tree of Jesse, *The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Architecture*, 2nd edn., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013; A Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1934.
[21] King James Bible, Isaiah 11:1.
[22] Only Meek's history trees read from the base to the crown, reflecting their medieval precursors, marking the "upward-leading way". Abbot Suger of St Denis (1081-1151), in E Panofsky, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and Its Art Treasures*, E Panofsky (trans.), 2nd edn., Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1946, 1979, pp.64-65, quoted in R Hostetter Smith, op.cit., p.104.
[23] J-B Piggin, 'The Great Stemma: A Late Antique Diagrammatic Chronicle of Pre-Christian Time', *Studia Patristica*, 2013, vol.62, pp.259-278, available online http://www.academia.edu/4190794/The_Great_Stemma_a_Late_Antique_Diagrammatic_Chronicle_of_Pre-Christian_Time, accessed 8 October 2015.

[24] Ibid., p.1. "A large-scale data visualization, [it] is extremely rare and perhaps unique in any literature of the first millennium, yet it would evince little surprise among modern readers precisely because information graphics are nowadays such a common feature in newspapers and textbooks." Note, however, that Piggin does not regard the stemma as a tree diagram: "The early node-and-link diagrams are not arboreal at all", although he does not explain why the stemma might not be a stylised tree form. JB Piggin, http://www.scottbot.net/HIAL/index.html@p=39166.html, posted 13 August 2014, accessed 8 October 2015.
[25] R Hostetter Smith, op.cit., p.51.
[26] Ibid., p.56.
[27] Ibid., p.56.
[28] S Schama, op.cit., pp.220-222, quote p.221.
[29] 'The Dream of the Rood', in R Hamer (ed.), *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse*, Faber and Faber, London, 2006, pp.163-175, ll.53-60.
[30] For an overview of these events see for example *Encyclopedia of American History*, 7th edn., HarperCollins, New York, 1996.
[31] For a detailed discussion of the role of the tree see AF Young, *Liberty Tree: Ordinary People and the American Revolution*, New York University Press, New York and London, 2006, chapter 8, pp.325-394.
[32] R Hostetter Smith, op.cit.
[33] Ibid., p.106.
[34] King James Bible, Kings 7:15-22.
[35] K Nielsen, op.cit., p.80.
[36] He wrote lyrically in his essay on *The Resources of the Western District* of the overwhelming awe he experienced seeing trees as he explored. See exhibition catalogue, pp.65, 80 n.29.
[37] Yuille is noted in the exhibition catalogue as an early settler, p.26. The Ballarat Historical Society has an 1857 photograph of the tree, catalogue ref. 681.97, http://www.ballarathistoricalsociety.com/collection/Records/Record681.79.htm.
[38] I am indebted to Lorraine Powell, Convenor, Historical Group, Friends of the Ballarat Gardens, and Chair, Victorian Branch Committee, Australian Garden History Society, for her generous assistance.
[39] S Schama, op.cit., pp.14-15.
[40] R Hostetter Smith, op.cit., pp.95-96.

Re-Instating Mr Meek

CONCLUSION



AA150

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Ballarat

2nd April 1895

To the President & Council
of the Ballarat Fine Art
Public Gallery Association
Ballarat

Gentlemen

I have the honor to tender herewith, for your acceptance, the original drawing of my published work entitled "Ballarat Past & Present", and shall be pleased to learn that you consider it worthy of a place amongst the many valuable works of art entrusted to your custody

I have the honor to be
Gentlemen
Yours faithfully
J. McCain Meek
per J.H.P.

J.M.

Figure 27. JM Meek, Letter of donation of original pen and ink drawing of *Past and Present of Ballarat*, Art Gallery of Ballarat.

> The artefacts are not exemplars of the project outcomes, they are the project outcomes.
>
> Stephen Scrivener[1]

Much has come to light and a good deal has been learned through 'The Inimitable Mr Meek'. A lost oeuvre is now found, and an eccentric colonial has been brought out of the archive and into the light. A worthy enterprise, one might think, but if the oeuvre turns to dust and the artist recedes into the background, how much of real value has been achieved? James Elkins is brutally frank about the limited readership and short lifespan of academic writing. "Each year there are tens of thousands of dissertations in the humanities, and even seminal texts are lost in fifty years' time. Scholarship, as Derrida says, is dangerously 'biodegradable'."[2] In the face of such poor prospects for Mr Meek and this project, it has been heartening to witness some outcomes for both, that stand a chance of holding up against academic and art historical entropy. This section presents the outcomes of the project, discusses key issues such as conservation and the historical importance of Meek's material, considers contemporary work that echoes aspects of Meek's work, and looks at the project's afterlife.

Re-Presenting Mr Meek, the second phase of the project, had a strong public profile and a number of immediate results flowed from the publicity. Of note were the visitor numbers to the exhibition, and the publicity surrounding it in terms of radio and television coverage and public lectures, giving Meek considerable public exposure; these outcomes were addressed in the curatorial discussions.[3] However, one of the most sustained consequences of this project is undoubtedly the conservation of Meek's works that it has entailed. Most of the works in the exhibition had conservation work carried out, as did works in various collections that were brought out of storage and reviewed for the first time in many years, and works in private collections have also been treated. Most recently, and during the time this exegesis has been in production, the State Library of Victoria has conserved both copies of Meek's *Atlas of the Australasian Colonies* 1861 in its collection. When permission to view them was given in 2013, not only were they in dire condition, as described in Part 2,[4] the high cost of conservation and their low priority (on what must be an enormous list of material requiring attention), suggested that they

were unlikely to see the light of day again. However, since those comments were written, the works have been beautifully stabilised and repaired. This is particularly exciting as one of these Atlases is the only second edition of a Meek lithograph known to survive. It displays an interesting number of changes compared with the first printing, including a dozen portraits of public figures that Meek has drawn in the lunette of decorative shields above the title. Moreover, the conservators are presenting the work at the 'Book and Paper' Conference of the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials in October 2016, with a view to publication;[5] in this way Meek's public profile and scholarship on his oeuvre are extended.

The movement of Meek works into the Art Gallery of Ballarat's collection through donations and reassignment is an allied benefit. The project prompted gifts of material, and also the relocation of a work from Ballarat City Council to the Gallery, as noted in Part 2.[6] These works have been conserved and will be kept in museum conditions, dramatically improving their life expectancy. It also means that the public will see Meek's work more frequently. For example, one of his early Ballarat sketches, donated for the 2015 exhibition, has recently been on display as part of another show, 'Ballarat in Pictures: a city is born', and the sketch remains on view currently in a core display of Ballarat works in the Gallery. It is to be hoped that the preservation of Meek's images and their visibility to a broad public might keep entropy in check for some time yet.

The less scholarship that is available on an artist, particularly one who has disappeared from the public gaze, the more likely s/he is to languish in an archive. Meek's works have been found in fourteen public collections throughout Australia, nine overseas collections, and at least seven private holdings. To provide published scholarship on objects in these collections is a valuable contribution, giving context and colour to the works, rekindling interest in them, and increasing the possibility that their light will radiate from the shadows of the archive.[7] Locating these works in disparate collections and linking them through research and commentary also creates an oeuvre: they are no longer unconnected, individual objects, they are a body of coherent material that collectively has weight and can, in turn, contribute to scholarship.

This project claims the reinstatement of Meek to his rightful place in the story of Australian graphic art. The fact that Meek is not alone in his reinstatement is significant.

Exhibitions in 2015-16 that bring other nineteenth-century artists out of the archive and into public view are arguing a similar case. Sasha Grishin's bold reestablishment of artist ST Gill,[8] Meek's contemporary, in a major exhibition at the State Library of Victoria,[9] opened just five weeks after *The Inimitable Mr Meek*, and demonstrates that a radical rethinking of the position of nineteenth-century graphic artists in Australia is underway. Similarly, an exhibition of William Strutt's work, *Heroes and villains: Strutt's Australia*,[10] which opened in Canberra shortly after the Gill show (and is currently in Melbourne at the time of writing), further demonstrates this re-evaluation. Strutt (1825-1915) was not a graphic artist, he was an academically trained painter, producing sketches, watercolours, prints and oils, but current focus on his arrival on the goldfields contemporaneously with Meek and Gill in 1852, and his depictions of life at the time, are part of this recent deepening of interest in the second half of the nineteenth century. All three artists, each in their own individual style and from their particular viewpoint, provide an explicit and detailed record of the most extraordinary fifty years in Australian history. The variety and value of these contributions to the national story, both as art and as historical evidence, are being recognised.

The parallels between ST Gill and Meek are striking. Both arrived from Britain as young men and made a life in the Australian colonies, produced works that were well received in their day, had a boom and bust career, died in poverty, and both were consigned to obscurity after their deaths. Grishin advocates strongly for his subject, and rightly so, although one reviewer questioned whether Grishin had overstated Gill's importance as "'Australia's most significant artist of the mid-19th century', [who] has been all but forgotten for the past 100 years or more; or at least … reduced to the rank of a secondary figure in the narrative of colonial art and a source of illustrations for histories of the goldfields."[11] Accounting adequately for Meek's and Gill's demotion from popularity to obscurity is not simple. Grishin posits that Gill's traditional audience for his watercolours "had largely evaporated"[12] by the 1870s and although he turned his artistic talent to various enterprises, in the last sixteen years of his life "commissions from many of his usual sources had largely ceased."[13] Grishin concludes that Gill "failed to find for himself a comfortable niche in the emerging structures of the colonial art world."[14] Commentary by the National Library of Australia attributed Gill's fall from favour to "the complex pattern of patronage and changing popular taste that affected Gill's viability as an artist."[15]

No doubt these reasons are valid, and they apply equally to Meek's decline. Certainly, changing taste was a significant factor for Meek. The kind of artwork that was appearing in the fin-de-siècle period in which Meek was producing his Ballarat history tablet and Gum-Tree work was quite revolutionary. Work such as Aubrey Beardsley's pen and ink drawings of 1894 began "to expand the perimeters of how a text can be pictured and packaged to attract a contemporary public."[16] Meek did not do this, rather he preferred to maintain "a fiercely independent creative stance"[17] to the end. In this way his career echoes that of ST Gill; it is also reminiscent of William Blake's highly focused interests and output, as previously noted. [18]

A feature of the project has been ongoing interest from members of the public and Meek descendants; this contact has been made by way of the Art Gallery of Ballarat. The establishment of a dedicated Meek website, www.mrmeek.com.au, is now providing a direct path to the research. The website provides an introduction to Meek and his works, and a means of contacting the researcher. It acknowledges the key roles of the Gallery and Federation University, provides links to Meek works held in other collections, and a link to the Gallery Shop for online purchase of the catalogue will be available shortly. In time, the site can develop further and highlights from the research can be added. A website is also appropriate for other reasons. Meek's 'look' may be high Victorian, but in some ways he is modern. He provides 'google' access to information, a one-stop data shop. The mixed system of word and image that was his stock-in-trade looks forward to the computer screen of today where word and image merge.[19] Meek delighted in the technological advances of his day, utilising them fully in the production of his large tablets. There is no doubt he would have embraced a technology that gave him unprecedented access to information and allowed him to speak to a global audience; there would certainly have been a Meek blog. In that spirit, an official Meek website seems entirely apt.

Meek's legacy endures in other contemporary ways. Present day South African artist William Kentridge, for example, shows striking similarities to Meek in his lithograph, *Remembering the Treason Trial* 2013.[20]

Figure 28. William Kentridge, *Remembering the Treason Trial* 2013, lithograph, 63 panels hand printed on a Takach litho press, 193.04 x 179.71cm overall, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

In an idiom strongly reminiscent of Meek's in *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree*, Kentridge deploys a central tree motif in a strongly political message that refers to the Treason Trial of Nelson Mandela and other anti-apartheid activists in 1956-61. The dynamics and significance of this trial and its consequences for the black South African population echo those of the Eureka Rebellion and the outcome for the Ballarat miners one hundred years earlier. Meek and Kentridge both display strong social justice values and a concern with the unfolding of history; both artists produced their work from a viewpoint some fifty years after the event. Kentridge's work is a powerful marriage of text and image; it uses a mass of data and varied texts that are woven in, around, and behind the tree in an overall structured, grid design; odd words and phrases appear in the tree and the surrounding vegetation. As with Meek's work, the text is an integral element in the design, and the

object requires the viewer/reader to move back and forth, close to and away from the work. As Thomas says, "it is this alternation between the visual and the textual that generates the meanings."[21]

The research as it was formulated is complete, but tantalising possibilities for future lines of enquiry that were beyond the parameters of this project have emerged. One of these potential fields of investigation is exploring comparisons with ST Gill and William Blake, as noted.

Another area of inquiry relates to the date of the *General Map*, thought to be 1861. During the analysis of the *Atlas* it became apparent that 1861 was unlikely to be correct and there are a number of strong indications for this. Firstly, it seems unlikely Meek would have completed the research and the calligraphy for the Map within a month of the publication date of the government map he used as a template, given on the work as 27 November 1861, although it is possible that Meek knew of the map's forthcoming release and prepared data in advance. The disappointing sales of his *Atlas* earlier in 1861, noted in the press, and the tragedy of the recent Burke and Wills expedition, would offer good reasons for haste in getting the map to the marketplace. However, Melbourne newspaper reviews in early September 1862 state that the map was due for publication shortly,[22] and by October it had been completed and issued to subscribers.[23] This is consistent with the return date of Landsborough's rescue expedition in August-September 1862, and the inclusion of his route on the map "in his own hand". It also allows time for the route of Walker's party, who arrived in Rockhampton in June 1862, to be known. Further evidence is that the map shows the western boundary of Queensland consistent with its widening on 23 June 1862.[24] Altogether, there appears to be a solid case for a revised date of 1862: further work will establish if this is valid.

There is also some uncertainty around the status of Meek's works that he sent to Stationers' Hall, London, as a means of securing copyright. 'Entered at Stationers Hall' appears on at least ten works.[25] The London archive has remained intact since the Middle Ages, surviving the Great Fire and two world wars, and is consequently a vast body of material with a tortuous cataloging system that has mutated through the centuries. Tracking Meek's works in the system, if they have been kept, has proven unwieldy from a distance, and on site inquiries with archive staff assistance may unravel the mystery of

the catalogues of other British institutions, including the British Library, the Bodleian, and the Scottish National Library, could usefully be examined.

Although a large amount of material emerged in the course of the research as Meek's works were found and tracked, there are gaps in the biographical story and personal insights into Meek remain speculative. Further research focused on his life may yield more information and a biography of such an enterprising and eccentric colonial character would be fascinating.

The design of this research has been innovative in that there does not appear to have been a PhD in Australia to date that has tackled the discovery of a 'lost' artist and proceeded in this tri-partite structure with an object-led paradigm. The collaborative nature of the project has been noted[26] and was one of its strengths, while the diversity of material, disciplines and activities involved was one of its pleasures. This project, and variants of it, could be explored as a model for future research.

There are several important outcomes of this research that may withstand the biodegradability of academic research, or at least postpone its inevitability. Firstly, an interesting and valuable body of artistic work has been found. As works on paper more than a century old, they were at risk: this risk has been materially reduced. Most importantly, the works have been shown, and Meek's reputation and legacy has been restored to the public domain. The works have been studied, subjected to thoughtful examination and careful analysis, and the process of scholarly commentary has begun. Finally, there is an afterlife for Meek in which his oeuvre can be seen, appreciated, understood, studied and enjoyed for the thoughtful and exuberant works that they are.

In his foreword to Grishin's account of the history of Australian art published in 2013, Tony Ellwood alerts the reader to the multi-layered, multi-faceted nature of this unfolding narrative. It serves as a timely and apt introduction for Meek's return to grace. "The story of Australian art is not monolithic, and with each retelling it becomes richer and more fascinating."[27] It is fitting that Meek takes his place in this story, adding to its richness and fascination.

Conclusion

[1] S Scrivener, 'Reflection in and on action and practice in creative-production doctoral projects in art and design', *Working Papers in Art and Design* 1, 2000, https://www.herts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/12281/WPIAAD_vol1_scrivener.pdf , n.p.
[2] J Elkins, *Our Beautiful, Dry, and Distant Texts. Art History as Writing*, Routledge, New York and London, 2000, p.296.
[3] Exegesis, Part 2, 'Re-Presenting Mr Meek', pp.39-40.
[4] Ibid., p.16.
[5] Private email from Marika Kocsis, Senior Conservator, SLV, to author, 20 June 2013.
[6] Exegesis, Part 2, 'Re-Presenting Mr Meek', p.21.
[7] MA Holly, 'What is Research in Art History, Anyway?' in MA Holly and M Smith (eds.), *What is Research in the Visual Arts? Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2008, pp.10-11, see opening quotation in exegesis, Part 1, 'Re-Discovering Mr Meek', p.3.
[8] S Grishin, *S.T. Gill & His Audiences*, National Library of Australia, Canberra and State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, 2015.
[9] *Australian Sketchbook: Colonial Life and the Art of ST Gill*, curator Professor Sasha Grishin, State Library of Victoria, 17 July to 25 October 2015, http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/australian-sketchbook-exhibition. Satellite exhibitions of Gill's works held in regional galleries, including the Art Gallery of Ballarat, were synchronised with the Melbourne show.
[10] *Heroes and villains: Strutt's Australia*, curator Matthew Jones, National Library of Australia, 2015, State Library of Victoria, 14 July-23 October 2016, http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/strutts-australia.
[11] C Allen, *Australian*, 5 September 2015, Arts Review, http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/st-gills-colonial-paintings-at-state-library-of-victoria-and-ballarat/story-fn9n8gph-1227509391941, accessed 5 September 2015.
[12] S Grishin, op.cit., p.222.
[13] Ibid., p.224.
[14] Ibid., p.232.
[15] 'S.T. Gill: Portrait of an Artist', National Library of Australia, https://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/australian-sketchbook/st-gill-portrait-of-an-artist, accessed 5 July 2016, homepage.
[16] E Haskell, 'Fusing Word and Image: The Case of the Cartoon Book, Wilde and Shenton', in M Heusser, C Clüver, L Weingarden and L Hoek, *The Pictured Word,* Word & Image Interactions 2, Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1998, pp.245-256, quote p.246.
[17] D Kelly, 'A Reading of the Structures of La Guerre (1916) by Pierre Albert-Birot', in M Heusser, M Hannoosh, L Hoek, C Schoell-Glass and D Scott (eds.), *Text and Visuality,* Word & Image Interactions 3, Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1999, pp.129-38, quote p.129.
[18] Comparisons with Blake have been noted in the exhibition catalogue, p.71 and in the exegesis, Part 3, 'Re-Evaluating Mr Meek', 'The Christian's Keepsake as Devotional Object', pp.62-63.
[19] W Hill, 'The Digital Scriptorium. Towards a Pre-Gutenberg Perspective on Contemporary Typographic Practice', in M Heusser, M Hannoosh, L Hoek, C Schoell-Glass and D Scott (eds.), *Text and Visuality,* op.cit., pp.229-34.
[20] William Kentridge (1955-). Originally a 63-panel piece, one panel was exhibited in *William Kentridge: Drawn from Africa*, curator Jane Kinsman, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 23 January-10 April 2016, http://nga.gov.au/Kentridge/.
[21] J Thomas, *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image*, Ohio University Press, Ohio, 2004, p.6.
[22] See for example *Age,* 6 September 1862, p.5.
[23] See for example *Age,* 15 October 1862, p.3.
[24] DJ Taylor, *The States of a Nation: The Politics and Surveys of the Australian State Borders*, Department of Lands, Bathurst, NSW, 2006.
[25] See Catalogue of Meek works, Appendix 1.
[26] See exhibition catalogue, pp. 26, 31 n.90.
[27] T Ellwood, Foreword, in S Grishin, *Australian Art: A History*, The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Victoria, 2013, p vi.

ERRATUM

Steam was not used directly in the lithographic process, but could be used to power the press. The author's statement that steam pressure was used to imprint the image on the lithographic stone, made in the catalogue on p.38, and in the exhibition didactic panel 'Written in Stone', was incorrect.[1] Francis Niven, the Ballarat printer, imported the first steam-driven press in Australia in 1858, followed by De Gruchy & Leigh in Melbourne.[2]

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[1] The author is indebted to Dr T Darragh, Curator Emeritus at Museum Victoria, for advising on this issue: private conversation, 14 June 2015; email communication, 17 June 2015.

[2] R Butler, *Printed Images in Colonial Australia 1801-1901*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2007, p.158.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

List of Known Meek Works

n.d. – no date
p/lithographer – photolithographer
Sizes are in centimetres
S / HALL – entered at Stationers' Hall London for copyright
EROMM – European Register of Microform and Digital Masters
Warrn Exam – *Warrnambool Examiner* newspaper
Dallimore – JT Dallimore, *The Journal of the Meek Family History Fellowship,* 1986-2004, nos.1-43.

Meek's Graphic Artworks							
TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	LITHOGRAPHER PRINTER	SIZE DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	SOURCE CATALOGUE REF	S / HALL [n=10]
Advance Victoria Also titled *Tablet of Victoria*	1860	Pen and ink		2100 x 1800 2700 x 1950 frame	No known copy	Dallimore, no.32, p.312, note Dallimore gives incorrect year; *Star* (Ballarat), 17 Jan 1860, description; *Warrn Exam,* 28 Feb 1860 p.2 description; *Argus*, 27 Mar, 28 Mar 2 Apr, 4 Apr, 27-31 Mar 1860.	Entered, as stated on *Atlas* version 2
Allegorical Tree	1868	Pen and ink			No known copy	Art Union; Dallimore, no.1, p.4; no.19, p.181; *Warrn Exam,* 27 Nov, 1 Dec, 8 Dec 1868; O'Callaghan, *Warrnambool Hotels,* booklet 11, 2012, p.8, advertisement for sale of Allansford Hotel includes original work, Mar 1869.	
Allegorical Tree	1868	Lithograph			No known copy	Art Union; Dallimore, no.1, p.4; no.19, p.181; *Warrn Exam,* 27 Nov, 1 Dec, 8 Dec 1868.	
Atlas of the Australasian Colonies; also titled *Historical and Descriptive Atlas of the British Colonies in Continental and Insular Australia*	1861	Photolithograph	de Gruchy & Leigh, Melbourne	189.5 x 120.5; 4 separate sheets 94.7 x 60.3 each	ACT Canberra National Library of Australia, Map Collection	912.94MEE Map rm 633, http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/3524905; http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231288144/view; EROMM	

Atlas of the Australasian Colonies	1861	Photolithograph	de Gruchy & Leigh, Melbourne		Melbourne State Library of Victoria	3465; no.439; accession no.YMAPS RF 804 A 1861	
Atlas of the Australasian Colonies	1861	Photolithograph		205.7 x 120.4	Art Gallery of Ballarat	2015.8	
Atlas of the Australasian Colonies	1861	Photolithograph		201.5 x 120 approx	Ballarat Gold Museum	05.0068	
Atlas of the Australasian Colonies	1861	Photolithograph			Warrnambool Historical Society		
Atlas of the Australasian Colonies	1861	Photolithograph			England Bodleian Library	015342900 http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:LSCOP_OX:oxfaleph015342900	
Atlas of the Australasian Colonies	1861	Photolithograph			Australia Private collection		
Atlas of the Australasian Colonies Version 2 [with portraits]	1862	Photolithograph; JW Thomson, publisher		190 x 119	Melbourne State Library of Victoria	YMAPS RF 800 A 1861 MEEK; http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/MAIN:Everything:SLV_VOYAGER3455202	Entered
Auckland Sunday School Union	1875	Pen and ink mounting for 7 photographic portraits			No known copy	*Auckland Star,* 3 Apr 1875 p.2, description.	
Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree	1895	Photolithograph proof copy	James Curtis, Ballarat	61.7 x 48.7	Art Gallery of Ballarat	1979.119	Entered
Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree	1895	Photolithograph			Ballarat Gold Museum	78.0084	
Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree	1895	Photolithograph			Ballarat Gold Museum	94.0029	
Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree	1895	Photolithograph			Ballarat Gold Museum	78.2331a	
Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree	1895	Photolithograph			Ballarat Gold Museum	78.2331b	
Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree	1895	Photolithograph			Warrnambool Historical Society		
Beauties of Shakspeare	1882	Lithograph	W Baker, Christchurch	500 x 600 approx	NZ Christchurch Canterbury Museum	JMcKM.4; 136479 NZ press reports 1882-83.	Entered

Beauties of Shakspeare	1882	Lithograph			London British Library	1880.d.2.(43.)	
Birthday Card for Thos Buchan	1898	Pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 9 July 1898; Dallimore, no.35, p.343.	
Birthday Card for Fred Buchan	1898	Pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 11,13 July 1898; Dallimore, no.36, p 351.	
Birthday Gift blanks	n.d.				No known copy	*Warrn Exam,* 14 Jan 1868, p.2.	
Birth Souvenir James McKain John Henry Meek	1884	Lithograph	W Baker, Christchurch		Australia Private collection	Dallimore, no.15, p.139.	
Cape Otway Gully	1864	Sketch			No known copy	*Warrn Exam,* 28 June 1864.	
Cape Otway Map	1864	Map		"Very large and fine map"	No known copy	*Warrn Exam,* 28 June 1864.	
Cape Otway Tree	1864	Sketch			No known copy	*Warrn Exam,* 28 June 1864.	
Christchurch City	1882	Lithograph	JT Smith, Christchurch	97 x 68	NZ Christchurch Canterbury Museum	JMcKM.3; 136475	Entered
Christchurch City	1882	Lithograph	JT Smith, Christchurch	102 x 68.5	NZ Wellington National Library of NZ	Eph-E-HISTORY-Canterbury-1882-01	
Christchurch City	1882			71 x 102	USA Private collection	Dallimore, no.18, p.173.	
Christian Character [Illustration of]	1869	Lithograph			Australia Private collection; reproduced in Dallimore	Meek diary, 22 April 1893; Dallimore, no.19, p.178; no.20, p.194; no.31, p.304; *Ballarat Courier*, 10 Sep 1869, description and review; also NZ press reports.	

The Christian's Keepsake	1880	Lithograph mounted on board		39 x 35	NZ Auckland War Memorial Museum	MS605 http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/LibraryCatalogue/20689.detail *Timaru Herald*, 30 June 1881, p.2.	
The Christian's Keepsake	1893	Lithograph	Rider & Mercer, Ballarat		No known copy; reproduced in 1973	Meek diary, 24 Apr, 10 Jun 1893; *Ballarat Evening Post*, 2 August, 1893; Dallimore, no.13, pp.120-121.	Entered
The Christian's Keepsake	1973	Reproduction of 1893 lithograph	Unknown printer		Art Gallery of Ballarat	2015.244 Dallimore, no.1, p.9; no.13, pp.120-121; used as a church fundraiser, *The Church Chronicle,* Sep 1973, p.9.	
Chronological Tree of NZ History	1876	Pen and ink with albumen print photographs		225 x 150	NZ Wellington National Library of NZ	F-009	
Chronological Tree of NZ History	1877	Photolithograph	NZ Government p/lithographer	75 x 53.5	NZ Wellington National Library of NZ	C-069-002	Entered
Chronological Tree of NZ History	1877	Lithograph	Schmidt & Co, Auckland	100 x 55	NZ Auckland War Memorial Museum	DU417 MEE	
Chronological Tree of NZ History	1877	Photolithograph	NZ Government p/lithographer		NZ Christchurch Canterbury Museum	JMcKM.6; 141952	
Chronological Tree of NZ History					NZ Auckland Library; not located	995 M49	
Chronological Tree of NZ History	1877	Photolithograph			England Bodleian Library	014791281 http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:LSCOP_OX:oxfaleph014791281	
Chronological Tree of Victorian History	1873	Photolithograph	John Noon, Crown Lands Office, Melbourne; John Paten, printer	114 x 89	Melbourne Museum Victoria	Reg.no.HT 6971	
Chronological Tree of Victorian History	1873	Photolithograph			Melbourne State Library of Victoria	3 copies: H10198, H3626, H11397	
Chronological Tree of Victorian History	1873	Photolithograph	John Noon, Crown Lands Office, Melbourne; John Paten, printer	88 x 58.5	ACT Canberra National Library of Australia, Pictures Collection	1566267; PIC Drawer 2930 #S8756	

Chronological Tree of Victorian History	1873	Photolithograph	John Noon, Crown Lands Office, Melbourne. John Paten, printer		North Melbourne Public Records Office Victoria	VPRS 7641/P0001/56	
Chronological Tree of Victorian History					Daylesford Museum; not located	Dallimore, no.1, p.4.	
Commodore Goodenough's Dying Words	1875	Pen and ink			No known copy	"Writing in ornamental characters and tablet form … copying the exact words [from] the *Sydney Illustrated News*"; *Auckland Star*, 26, 27, 29, 30 Nov, 1, 7, 8 Dec 1875; *Daily Southern Cross*, 30 Nov 1875; *Taranaki Herald,* 28 Feb 1878.	
Commodore Goodenough's Dying Words	1875	Lithograph			No known copy	*Auckland Star*, 29 Dec 1875, p.2.	
The Family Keepsake blanks; also titled *Family Register*		Photocopy			Australia Private collection	Meek diary, 22, 24 Apr, 19, 22 May 1893; *Standard* (Warrn) 11 Nov 1980. Dallimore, no.8, p.70; no.20, p.194.	
Family Register Fidler/Cockman	1865	Lithograph pen and ink	A Toal, Melbourne	56.4 x 43.6	Warrnambool Historical Society		
Family Register Ham	1893	Lithograph pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 13, 21, 22 Apr, 1, 12 May 1893.	
Family Register Miller	1893	Lithograph pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27 Apr 1893.	
Family Register of Royal Family [proposed]	1866				No known copy	*Warrn Exam,* 23 Feb 1866.	
Family Register Roxburgh	1867	Lithograph pen and ink	A Toal, Melbourne		Annandale, Jamaica	Australia, Artemis International, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, 2014, series 6, episode 4, 'Richard Roxburgh'.	
Family Register Skilbeck	1870	Reproduced as book plate	A Toal, Melbourne			HA McCorkell (ed.), *The Diaries of Sarah Midgley and Richard Skilbeck: A Story of Australian Settlers 1851-1864*, facing p.160.	
Family Register Stewart	1893	Lithograph pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 9 May 1893.	

Family Register Tieman	1872	Lithograph pen and ink			No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore only	Dallimore, no. 4, p.35.	
First House in Ballarat	1852	Pen and ink		14 x 22	Melbourne Royal Historical Society of Victoria	RHSV_ART-0252.001	
First House in Ballarat	Probably 1890s	Pen and ink		12.9 x 20.5	Art Gallery of Ballarat	2015.241	
First House in Ballarat [Bury commission for artist Grant]	1893	Pen and ink		61.5 x 67 18.5 x 24.5 frame	Australia Private collection	Meek diary, 17, 20 Apr, 16 Nov 1893; Dallimore, no.19, p.183; no.26, p.250.	
First House and Police Camp	Probably 1852	Reproduced			No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore only	Dallimore, no.13, p.121.	
Gellibrand River	1864	Pen and ink			No known copy	*Warrn Exam,* 22 Mar 1864.	
General Map of Australia Shewing the Routes of the Explorers	1861	Photolithograph	De Gruchy & Leigh, Melbourne; Fenwick & MacFarlan, mount	52.4 x 72.8 on sheet 67.4 x 98.2	ACT Canberra National Library of Australia, Map Collection	Map rm 869, http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/3550075; EROMM	
General Map of Australia Shewing the Routes of the Explorers	1861	Photolithograph		55.3 x 77.3	Melbourne University Map Collection	804a1861	
Golden Point, Ballarat [possibly Meek]	1852	Reproduced in newspaper				*Illustrated London News* 1852; *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 Feb 1988; Dallimore, no.5 p.46.	
Habeas Corpus: an act for the better securing of the subject and for prevention of imprisonments beyond the seas.	1860	Lithograph		124 x 73.5	Melbourne State Library of Victoria	H93.344; http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/255668; One of triptych comm'd by Redmond Barry for Melb Pub Library, *Argus*, 27 Sep 1860.	
Jubilee 1887 [In Commemoration of Year of Jubilee 1887]; also titled *Zealandia's Jubilee Souvenir*	1887	Photolithograph	Gibbs, Shallard & Co, Sydney	101.4 x 81 image 117 x 96.8 frame	NZ Wellington Te Papa Museum	Reg.no.1992-0035-2398	Entered

Jubilee 1887 [In Commemoration of Year of Jubilee 1887]		Photolithograph	Gibbs, Shallard & Co, Sydney	880 x 1070 approx	NZ Christchurch Canterbury Museum	JMcKM.2; 136468	
Jubilee 1887 [In Commemoration of Year of Jubilee 1887]; with synopsis	1887	Photolithograph	Meek & Harden, Sydney	88 x76 image 25.5 x19.5 synopsis	London British Library	ID 002445097; General Reference Collection 74/1851.c.10.(28*.) EROMM-ID gbm8804010-8	
Jubilee 1887 [In Commemoration of Year of Jubilee 1887]		Photolithograph			Scotland National Library	K.77.a.11	
Jubilee 1887 [In Commemoration of Year of Jubilee 1887]		Photolithograph			England, Bodleian Library	014788790 http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:LSCOP_OX:oxfaleph014788790	
Magna Charta [sic]	1860	Pen and ink			No known copy	One of triptych comm'd by Redmond Barry for Melb Pub Library, *Argus*, 27 Sep 1860.	
Maps [unspecified]					No known copy	J Sadleir, *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer*, p.29.	
Marriage Souvenir blank					Australia Private collection	Dallimore, no.41, p.402.	
Marriage Souvenir Daughter Marianne Dallimore	1870				No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore only	Dallimore, no.8, p 69; no.16, p.148.	
Masonic Emblems Chart	1879	Lithograph			No known copy	*Press* (NZ), 28 Nov 1879, p.2.	
Matson Manifold Genealogical Tree of Family History	c.1880	Lithograph	JT Smith, Christchurch	86 x 66 image	NZ Christchurch Canterbury Museum	JMcKM.1; 141955	
Memento Card, Memorial Card, Monumental Card blanks [variously titled]		Lithograph				*Hampton Guardian*, 19 Jun 1874; Meek diary, 19, 20 May 1893.	
Memento Card Bury	1893	Lithograph Pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 13, 18, 19 May 1893; Dallimore, no.21, p.197.	
Memento Card for cook	1895	Lithograph Pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 3 Apr 1895; Dallimore, no.32, p.311.	
Memento Card Irwin	1893	Lithograph Pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 19, 20 Jul 1893; Dallimore, no.30, p.289.	
Memorial Card Logan	1898	Lithograph Pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 13 Jul 1898; Dallimore, no.36, p.351.	

Memento Card McCrae	1893	Lithograph Pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 5 Sep 1895; Dallimore, no.30, p.292.	
Memorial Card Nedwell	1898	Lithograph Pen and ink			No known copy	Meek diary, 16, 17, 20 Sep 1898; Dallimore, no.38, p.372.	
Memento Mori Crook	1886	Lithograph Pen and ink			No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore only	Dallimore, no.28, p.276.	
Memento Mori Dallimore		Lithograph Pen and ink			No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore only	Dallimore, no.16, p.149.	
Memento Mori Mrs Meek	1884	Lithograph Pen and ink			No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore only	Dallimore, no.2, p.16.	
Orange Society Chart	1880	Pen and ink [to be lithographed]			No known copy	*Sydney Morning Herald,* 19 Mar 1880.	
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Pen and ink [presentation original]		175 x 150 approx	Ballarat Gold Museum	05.0060 "Presented to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery Association 11th April 1895 by James McKain Meek".	
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph			Ballarat Gold Museum	80.0317	
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph		120.5 x 95 sight 136.6 x 111.2 frame	Ballarat Gold Museum	80.0439	
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph		fragments	Ballarat Gold Museum	10.0239	
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph		CD image	Ballarat Gold Museum	CD-COL-032	
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph	Rider & Mercer, Ballarat	150 x 100 approx frame	Ballarat Federation University Australia Heritage Collection	Cat.no.10782	
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph			Ballarat City Council	Donated to City of Ballarat 1961	
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph	Rider & Mercer, Ballarat	125 x 108 approx with stretchers	City of Ballarat Libraries, Australiana Research Collection	Office map cabinet	Entered

Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph			Melbourne State Library of Victoria	H11580	
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph			Warrnambool Historical Society		
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph	Rider & Mercer, Ballarat		Australia Private collection		
Past and Present of Ballarat	1893	Photolithograph			London British Library	ID 002445096; General Reference Collection Tab.11747.a.(24.)	
Petition and Bill of Rights	1860	Pen and ink			No known copy	One of triptych comm'd by Redmond Barry for Melb Pub Library, *Argus*, 27 Sep 1860.	
Police Camp Ballarat	1852	Pen and ink		17 x 13	Melbourne Royal Historical Society of Victoria	RHSV_ART-0252.002	
Police Camp Ballarat	1852	Photocopy			Ballarat Gold Museum	89.0714	
Police Camp Ballarat	1852	Reproduced in journal				*Victorian Historical Magazine*, Part I, 1911, facing p.73; Dallimore, no.5, p.43.	
Police Camp Ballarat	1913	Reproduced as book plate				J Sadleir, *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer*, facing p.29.	
Portrait Mrs Meek		Pen and ink			No known copy	Dallimore, no.2, p.12.	
Portrait Mrs Meek		Lithograph	W Baker, Christchurch		No known copy	Dallimore, no.2, p.12.	
Shakspear Testimonoria [sic] also titled *Shakspeare Memorial*	1861	Photocopy of 1995 photograph				Dallimore, no.27, p.262; no.43, p.418. Extensive press reports 1861.	
A lithographed inscription in memory of Shakespeare	1862	Lithograph	Melbourne		London British Library	ID 002445094; EROMM-ID gbm9103181-4; EROMM-ID gbm9009400-4	
Sketches of Victoria [unspecified]		Pen and ink				WB Withers, *The History of Ballarat: From the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time*, Facsimile of the 1887 2nd edn., FW Niven, Ballarat, Queensberry Hill Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1980, p.53.	

Testimonial/Certificate Christie	1882	Pen and ink gold and colours			No known copy	*Star* (NZ), 21 Mar 1882, p.3.	
Testimonial Fairfax	1860				No known copy	*Sydney Morning Herald,* 21 April 1860, p.5.	
Testimonial Goldie	1875	Pen and ink			No known copy	*Daily Southern Cross* (NZ), 30 Aug 1875, p.2.	
Testimonial James	1894				No known copy	Meek diary, 10 Feb 1895; Dallimore, no.27, p.261.	
Testimonial Thos Raingill	1866				No known copy	*Warrn Exam,* 23 Feb 1866.	
Victoria, a Colony in Australia.	c.1866	Photolithograph	John Noone; Hamel & Co, printer Melbourne	149 x 94.5	Melbourne State Library of Victoria	H33217; http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/252983	
Visiting Cards blanks	1868				No known copy	*Warrn Exam*, 14 Jan 1868, p.2.	
Visiting Cards Ham family	1893				No known copy	Meek diary, 16 May 1893; Dallimore, no.21, p.200.	
Wai Wera Medicinal Waters	1876				No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore only	Dallimore, no.1, p.6.	
Warrnambool Tablet	1856	Pen and ink		91.4 x 61	No known copy	*Warr Exam,* 11and 14 Nov 1856, p.2, presentation to Mechanics' Institute.	
Wreck of the Wairarapa	1895	Proof copy no.137	James Curtis, Ballarat		Australia Private collection	Meek diary, Feb-Apr 1895; Dallimore, no.1, p.7; no.8, p.76; no.9, p.85; no.23, p.226; no.32, p.309-311.	Entered
Meek's Written Material							
Autobiography [possibly same work as *Reminiscences of Early Days of Ballarat*]	n.d.	MS page			Australia Private collection; no known complete copy	Dallimore, no.1, p.4.	
Benevolent Asylum (Illustrated History of)	1894	Published pamphlet			No known copy	Meek diary, 18 June 1898*;* *Ballarat Star,* 21 Aug 1894; Dallimore, no.29, p.281; no.35, p.342.	
Byaduk Caves	1867	Newspaper article				*Hamilton Free Press,* 28 Jan 1867.	

Cape Otway Visit	1864	Newspaper article				*Warrn Exam,* 27 May 1864.	
Cape Otway Visit	1864	Letter to Editor				*Warrn Exam,* 24 May 1864.	
Cape Otway Visit	1864	Public lecture Warrnambool			No known transcript	*Warrn Exam,* 25 June, Supp 5 July 1864.	
Cape Otway Visit	1865	Public lecture Warrnambool			No known transcript	Warrn Exam, 10 Feb 1865, pp.2,3. Dallimore, no.18, p.172.	
Cape Otway Visit Gold Exploration	1864	Diary, Public meeting				*Warrn Exam*, 16 Aug 1864.	
Cape Otway Visit Gold Exploration	1864	Letter to Editor				*Warrn Exam,* 7 Oct 1864.	
Cape Otway Visit Gold Exploration	1864	Letter to Editor				*Warrn Exam,* 22 Nov 1864.	
Cape Otway Visit Gold Exploration with Geologist	1864	Letter to Editor				*Warrn Exam,* 23 Dec 1864.	
Commodore Goodenough's Dying Words: With an Addendum on Life and Death, and Other Original Poems	1875-6	Printed pamphlet		25 x 17 approx	ACT Canberra National Library of Australia, Petherick Collection	PETHpam 1188	
Commodore Goodenough's Dying Words: With an Addendum on Life and Death, and Other Original Poems	1887	Printed pamphlet	Thos Smith, Warrnambool	22 x 13.5 x 3, 28p.	Melbourne, State Library of Victoria	819.91 Au78P (vol.5); http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/176558 Signed with compliments by Meek	
Commodore Goodenough's Dying Words: With an Addendum on Life and Death, and Other Original Poems		Photocopy			Warrnambool Public Library		
Creation	1874	Printed pamphlet	AT Mason, Fitzroy, Melbourne	18 x 10, 6p. no covers	Melbourne, State Library of Victoria	MCP A821.1 M471C; http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/19 9539	
Creation and Millenium	1898	Printed pamphlet	James Curtis Ballarat	20 x 15 approx; covers detached	ACT Canberra National Library of Australia, Petherick Collection	Meek diary, 19,20,21,23 Jul, 1 Aug 1898; JAFp POETRY A 821 MEE	
Creation and Millenium	1898	Printed pamphlet		20 x 15 approx	Ballarat Gold Museum	05.0504	

Creation and Millenium	1898	Photocopy		20 x 15 approx	Warrnambool Public Library		
Creation and Millenium	1898	Printed pamphlet			Australia Private collection		
Curdies River Inlet to Terang Exploration diary	1865	Newspaper article				*Warrn Exam,* 4 Aug 1865; Dallimore, no.13, pp.122-123.	
Curdie's River and Inlet (Description of)	1864	Newspaper article				*Warrn Exam,* Supp 1 July 1864, 25 July 1865, 4 Aug 1865.	
Curdie's River (poem*)*	n.d. c.1870				No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore only	Dallimore, no.13, p.118.	
Devotional Poem	n.d.		unpublished		Australia, Private collection; reproduced in Dallimore	Dallimore, no.13, p.126.	
Diaries, also titled *Journals*	1893-95, 1898-99	Handwritten journals x 4		24.0 x 18.5	Art Gallery of Ballarat	2015.243.1-4	
Diaries	1893-95, 1898-99	Transcripts	JT Dallimore		Australia Private collection; copies held by author	Dallimore newsletters, passim.	
Epic Poem	1886	Printed pamphlet	R Cuming, Christchurch	24.5, 8p.	NZ Auckland War Memorial Museum	Call no. PR6025.E26; Reg.no. 6656; ID 148469	
Essay on Pensions for Old Age	c.1896	Original MS			Art Gallery of Ballarat	In handwritten journal 2015.243	
Essay on Pensions for Old Age	c.1896	Unpublished MS			City of Ballarat Libraries, Australiana Research Collection; not located	Card index	
Essay on Pensions for Old Age	c.1896	Transcript				Dallimore no.4, p.31; no.22, pp.208, 211; no.23, pp.224-225; no.25, pp.242-243; no.28, pp.269-271; no.29, pp.279-280.	
Federation and Free Trade	1894	Pamphlet or MS			No known copy	Dallimore, no.30, pp.289, 292.	
Fifty Years' Colonial Experience	1887	Printed pamphlet	"Press" Office, Christchurch, NZ	8p.	London British Library	ID 002445095; General Reference Collection Tab.10491.g.14.(3.)	

Fishing Industry	1858	Letter to Editor				*Warrn Exam,* 7 May 1858.	
Gellibrand: Its Scenery and Resources	1864	Newspaper article				*Warrn Exam,* 17 Sep 1864.	
Katipo Spider [Meek's son badly bitten]	1876	Newspaper article				NZ 1876: *New Zealand Herald*, 8 May, p.2; *Waikato Times*, 11 May, p.3; *Evening Post*, 13 May, p.5; *Timaru Herald*, 15 May, p.3; *Press*, 16 May, p.2; *Taranaki Herald*, 17 May, p.2; *Wanganui Herald*, 19 May, p.2.	
Land Nationalisation, Taxation & Federation	n.d.	Unpublished MS			City of Ballarat Libraries, Australiana Research Collection		
Letter to Art Gallery of Ballarat donating *Ballarat Past and Present*	1895				Art Gallery of Ballarat	Gallery archives	
Letter to wife, Julia Meek	1859				No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore only	Dallimore, no.2 p.15.	
Lord's Prayer, Creed and Ten Commandments		Pen and ink		Miniatures on back of stamp, or coin size	Australia, Private collection; reproduced in Dallimore	Meek diary, 3 Jan 1894; Dallimore, no.1, p.14; no.4, p.28; no.5, p.40; no.9, p.83; no.27, p.260.	
National Anthem	c.1896	Unpublished MS			Art Gallery of Ballarat	In handwritten journal 2015.243	
National Anthem	c.1896	Transcript				Dallimore, no.4, p.32.	
Nationalisation of the Lands	1883	Public lecture Christchurch			No known transcript	Lecture, 19 Jan 1883; *Press* (NZ), 18 Jan 1883.	
Nationalisation of the Lands	1894	Public lecture Ballarat			No known transcript	Lectures, 8 and 16 Feb 1894; Dallimore, no.27, p.261.	
On Life and Death	n.d.		Field, printer, Auckland		NZ Auckland Library, Sir George Grey Coll	Inscribed by Meek to Sir George Grey.	
On Life and Death	n.d.				Melbourne State Library of Victoria	In *Commodore Goodenough's Dying Words*, pp.11-19, comment pp.10, 19. http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/176558; Dallimore, no.17, pp.164-165.	

Our Lands and How They Ought to be Disposed of	1879	Public lecture Tauranga			No known transcript	*Bay of Plenty Times* (NZ), 27 Nov 1879 p.2.	
Past Present and Future of Australasia	1878	Public lecture Greymouth, Otahuhu, Onehunga			No known transcript	*Grey River Argus* (NZ), 9 May 1878 p.2.	
Rail line between Curdies Inlet and North	c.1863	Public lecture Warrnambool			No known transcript	*Warrn Exam*, 4 Aug 1865, published exploration diary, 18 Feb 1865.	
Reminiscences of Early Days of Ballarat	1890	Public lecture Warrnambool			No known transcript	Lecture, 31 Mar 1890; *Warrnambool Standard*, 1 Apr 1890, review.	
Reminiscences of Early Days of Ballarat		Unpublished Book			No known copy	Meek diary, 1 Aug 1898 [MS with Sadleir to be published].	
Resources of the Western District	1869	Printed pamphlet	Harrison & George, Warrnambool	21.5 x 13.5 x 3.5, 29p. in bound volume *Victorian Pamphlets*	Melbourne State Library of Victoria	824 V66 (v.102); http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/247549 "Donation from Mr J.M.Meek of Warrnambool 17 Oct 1872"	
Resources of the Western District	1869	Printed pamphlet		Covers detached	Sydney NSW State Library	PAM 86/733	
Resources of the Western District	1869	Printed pamphlet and photocopy	Harrison & George, Warrnambool	No covers	Geelong Deakin University	099 Pam/Mis; 919.45 Mee/Rot	
Resources of the Western District	1869	Photocopy			Warrnambool Public Library		
Resources of the Western District	1869	Printed pamphlet	Harrison & George, Warrnambool	22; 22p.	NZ Wellington National Library	Pam A 1869 MEE	
Resources of the Western District	1869	Published lecture Warrnambool			No known copy	*Warrn Exam*, 6 Jul 1869, p.3; 16 July 1869, p.2.	

Signature [on Mortgage Instrument]	1853	Pen and ink on parchment; Sale of Land document in bound volume		50 x 35 approx	Melbourne Land Victoria, Department of Transport, Planning & Local Infrastructure, Memorials Library, Laverton, Victoria	1853, memorial no.19, book 3, *Welsh by direction of Meek to Gosling.*	
Strange But True Stories About Gold [possibly part of Reminiscences of Early Days of Ballarat]	c.1896	Unpublished MS			City of Ballarat Libraries, Australiana Research Collection	Dallimore, no.4, pp.33-34.	
Trams	1866	Newspaper article				*Warrn Exam,* 22 May 1866.	
Travels in the Western District [*Resources of the Western District]*	c.1867					*Warrn Exam*, 27 Aug 1867, p.3; *Warrn Exam*, 'My Book & Why I Wrote It', 31 Dec 1867, p.2; 21 Jul 1868, p.3; Letter to Editor, 24 Jul 1868.	
Waste Lands of the Colony	1880	Lecture Otahuhu			No known transcript	*Auckland Star,* 19 Jan 1880 p.2, 20 Jan 1880 p.2.	
West Coast Fishery	1858	Letter to Editor				*Warrn Exam,* 25 May, 23 Jun 1858.	
Wreck of the Wairarapa: Zealandia's Annie McQuaid	n.d. [1895]	Printed sheet	James Curtis, Ballarat		Australia Private collection	Meek diary, Feb-Apr 1895; Dallimore, no.1, p.7; no.8, p.76; no.9, p.85; no.23, p.226; no.32, p.309-311.	
Zealandia's Annie Macquaid: Only A Stewardess	n.d. [1895]	Printed card	James Curtis, Ballarat	Colour	Australia Private collection	Meek diary, Feb-Apr 1895; Dallimore, no.1, p.7; no.8, p.76; no.9, p.85; no.23, p.226; no.32, p.309-311.	
Other Material by Meek							
Fishing Rods, Walking Sticks [handcrafted for sale]	1865					*Warrn Exam,* 7 Feb 1865.	

Meek Related Material							
Ballarat Hotel 1853 George Grant after JM Meek	1890s	Oil on photograph		15.9 x 21.3	Art Gallery of Ballarat	2004.12	
First House in Ballarat George Grant after JM Meek Comm'd by Thos Bury	1893	Oil on canvas painted by Grant from sketch by Meek		41.8 x 67.2 (sight)	Australia Private collection	Meek diary 1893; Dallimore, no.19 p.183; no.26, p.250.	
First House in Ballarat George Grant after JM Meek	post 1893	Oil on photo		15.9 x 21.6	Art Gallery of Ballarat	1979.204	
First House in Ballarat George Grant after JM Meek	post 1893	Oil on photo		10.6 x 14.9 21.4 x 26.4 frame	Art Gallery of Ballarat	2009.62	
First House in Ballarat [attributed to George Grant]	n.d.	water colour [oil on photograph]			Ballarat Historical Society	78.0262	
First House in Ballarat 1852		Photograph			City of Ballarat Libraries, Australiana Research Collection	A.R. 4739 Photograph Collection	
First House Ballarat Chas Young [active in Victoria c.1900]	n.d.	Oil on cardboard or Oil on photograph		15.8 x 30.8	Ballarat Historical Society	350.79 Photograph Collection	
Government Camp Attributed to Meek [probably incorrect]	n.d.	Coloured sketch			Ballarat Gold Museum	488.79 (old card catalogue)	
Heytesbury District Historical Society Papers	1972-1973	Material relating to Meek [R Duruz]			State Library of Victoria	MS MSB 471	
Meek's House, 1852, Ballaarat's First Home		Reproduced as book plate				Richard Kleine, *Go For Gold*, Rotary Club of Forest Hill, Victoria, 1994; Dallimore, no.24, p.229.	
Meek's lemonade, cordial, ginger-beer and soda-water factory, and boarding house, on the basalt escarpment west of the diggings George Grant after JM Meek		Reproduced as book plate				W Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat 1851-1901*, MUP, 1978, p.31.	
Meek's Store Ballarat 1851	n.d.	Photograph of drawing		9 x 14; on mount	State Library of Victoria	Accession no.H5084; Image no. a13719	

Photograph of Meek Unknown photographer	n.d.	Sepia photograph		29 x 36 approx; seated, full torso, aged	Australia Private collection		
Photograph of Meek Dutch & Bull, Christchurch	n.d.	Photograph		Head and shoulders, middle aged	Australia Private collection		
Photograph of Meek Grand & Dunlop, Christchurch	n.d.	Photograph		Head and torso with sash, middle aged	Australia Private collection		
Photograph of Meek Unknown photographer	n.d.	Photograph		Standing, holding scroll, young man	Australia Private collection		
Photograph of Meek Unknown photographer	1895 [or 1898]	Photograph		26 x 17.5 45.5 x 33 mount; head and torso, aged	NZ Marlborough Museum	14018	
Photograph of Meek Unknown photographer	1895 [or 1898]	Reproduced as book plate		Same as Marlborough Museum photograph		Reproduced in *Creation and Millenium* 1898, facing title page. Meek diary 7, 20 June 1898; Dallimore, no.15, p.140.	
Photograph of Meek Chuck Vice Regal	n.d.	Photograph	R Walker compiler	29.5 x 37.5; close up face and beard, aged	Ballarat, Federation University Australia Historical Collection, Geoffrey Blainey Research Centre	15771 *Pioneers of Ballarat*, photo montage Row 2, 1st left.	
Photograph of Meek Chuck Vice Regal	n.d.	Photograph	R Walker compiler	Same as Federation University Australia photograph	City of Ballarat Libraries, Australiana Research Collection	*Pioneers of Ballarat*, photo montage Row 2, 1st left.	
Photograph of Meek [1855] Unknown photographer	1920s	Photograph			Warrnambool Public Library	*Pioneers' Board*, row 2, 7th from left; R38 neg.no.2/15, MEEK 1855; *Warrn Standard* 20 July 1922, 11 Jul 1924.	
Photograph of Meek Unknown photographer	n.d.	Reproduced		Head and shoulders, middle aged	No known copy; reproduced in *Ancestor* and Dallimore only	Reproduced in *Ancestor*, vol.19, no.1, Autumn 1988, p.12, photograph supplied by Dallimore. No.7, p.58.	
Photograph of Meek Unknown photographer	n.d.	Reproduced		Seated at table with pen, Meek *Atlas* on wall behind, in middle age, middle aged	No known copy; reproduced in Dallimore, Duruz and Hay only	Reproduced in: R Duruz, *The Story of Glenample*; Pap Books, Warrnambool Photo Art Printers, Warrnambool, 1977; PR Hay, *Meeting of Sighs*, Warrnambool Institute Press, 1981; Dallimore, no.9, p.79.	

Photograph of Meek Unknown photographer	n.d.	Reproduced		Head and shoulders, young man	No known copy; reproduced in O'Callaghan only	E O'Callaghan, Lecture on Meek, Warrnambool Historical Society, Victoria.	
Photograph of Mrs Meek Unknown photographer	n.d.	Photograph		Close up face, bonnet, aged	NZ Marlborough Museum	014019	
Photograph of Mrs Meek Unknown photographer	n.d.	Photographic copy	Early photograph copied by GF Jenkinson Studio, Broken Hill NSW	Same as Marlborough Museum photograph	Australia Private collection	Dallimore, no.17, p.166.	
Photograph of Mrs Meek and son John Thomas Meek Unknown photographer	n.d.	Photograph			Australia Private collection	Dallimore, no.17, p.166.	
Portrait of James McKain Meek, Mr Oldham	1890s	Oil painting			Last seen c.1956	Meek diary, 3, 10, 18, 20 May 1893; 18 June 1898; Dallimore, no.20, p.195; no.21, p.200, no.35, p.342.	

APPENDIX 2

THE EXHIBITION STORY

Note: this preparatory document was written in March 2014, early in the curatorial phase of the project, and fifteen months before the exhibition date. It was designed to focus and guide the planning of the show.

This exhibition brings to light the works of James McKain Archibald Job Meek, a now almost forgotten Victorian artist, on the 200th anniversary of his birth on 15 June 1815.

Meek identified himself very strongly with Ballarat. He styled himself 'Founder of Ballarat', and claimed to have precipitated the second gold rush in 1852, without which Ballarat may have become simply a footnote in the history of gold exploration. He lived and worked here twice: in the gold rush days of the early 1850s and later, when Ballarat was an established colonial city in the 1890s.

Meek was one of those many early settlers who were astonishingly versatile; indeed, their survival in the new colony depended on being able to turn their hand to just about anything. We find Meek as a miner, mariner, explorer, entrepreneur, businessman, sly grog dealer, shipping fleet manager, fishmonger, ferryman, writer, lecturer, poet, teacher and, of course, an artist.

During his lifetime Meek would put his latest work on show in Ballarat, Melbourne, Warrnambool, or Sydney, write what might now be called an 'advertorial' in the local paper, and make sales of the lithographed copies. He did the same in various cities in New Zealand where he lived for several years.

His works are fascinating, teeming with information, written in his trademark miniature calligraphy, and highly embellished. Many of them are quite astonishing in their complexity, and in terms of graphic design they appear to be unparalleled. They convey his enormous pride in the birth and burgeoning of a new nation and his own part in this remarkable unfolding drama, and his major works all document and celebrate it.

Meek was a true Victorian, and we recognise the hallmarks: the elaborate decoration, the symmetry, the national and imperial fervour. His was an age of fine draughtsmanship, when artists conjured the most eccentric ideas and brought them to life. But Meek's work

remained static: his output of the 1890s is essentially unchanged from that of 30 years earlier.

It is difficult to find any direct comparisons with Meek. This exhibition will explore whether there are indeed any artists working in a similar vein. While the art of the illuminated testimonial burgeoned during the late nineteenth century, these works entirely lack the idiosyncratic detail and obsessive deployment of text that is characteristic of Meek's work. The design work closest to Meek's is possibly that of Ernest Leviny, a silversmith and contemporary of Meek. And this is why Meek's work is important; he appears to be a one-off, a stand-alone. The images are remarkable in their conception; the penmanship is outstanding; and from our point of view, he is local – he laid very strong claims to Ballarat, and he had a Trans-Tasman career.

APPENDIX 3

EXHIBITION DIDACTIC PANELS and EXTENDED WALL LABELS

Four didactic panels and nineteen extended wall labels were deployed in the exhibition. Each extended wall label incorporated the object label. Not all twenty-eight objects had interpretive text.

This is a transcript of the panels and labels. The texts are grouped to reflect the wall hang in the exhibition, see Figure 6, p.25 for the exhibition layout. Didactic panels are indicated in bold capital letters; titles of the extended wall labels are in bold lower case. A brief rationale is provided for each didactic panel and for the wall label calling for donations to conserve the original *Past and Present of Ballarat.*

1. TITLE WALL [central, freestanding wall, south side]

Exhibition Didactic Panel

Rationale

This panel introduced Meek, his Ballarat connections, and his Victorian style. It also put the view that his work is singular. The panel was located on the title wall that showcased two pivotal Ballarat works.

REDISCOVERING A LOST ART

James McKain Archibald Job Meek (1815–1899) was a Victorian-era graphic artist, acclaimed in his own time, but now almost forgotten. This is the first exhibition of his works and marks the 200th anniversary of his birth in Great Yarmouth, England.

Meek settled in Australia in 1838 and spent the rest of his life in the colonies, including several years in New Zealand, in boom-and-bust circumstances. Like many early settlers he was astonishingly versatile — he worked in all manner of occupations, from miner to mariner, explorer to entrepreneur, and as graphic artist extraordinaire.

Self-styled founder of this city, he claimed to have precipitated Ballarat's second gold rush in 1852, and to have built the first substantial dwelling here the same year. As an

elderly man in the 1890s, he returned to Ballarat, where he continued to create the large, intricate charts for which he was known, and wrote essays, poems and memoirs.

His works appear typically Victorian — elaborate decoration, symmetry, national and imperial fervour — but they seem to be singular in their complex graphic design, idiosyncratic detail and lavish deployment of text. Meek held fast to his own aesthetic vision throughout his career, and by the end of his life, his works were emblems of a passing age.

In 1895, Meek donated his latest work, *Past and Present of Ballarat* to the Ballarat Fine Art Public Gallery. It is fitting that this work is on show in the Gallery for the first time since it was originally displayed here 120 years ago, and that Meek will finally be celebrated in the city he held dear.
[272 words]

Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree (proof copy) 1895, photolithograph, Art Gallery of Ballarat
This work, in the Gallery collection, was the catalyst for the Meek research project. It is eccentric and quintessentially Meek: it displays imperialist and nationalist fervour, radical political rhetoric, density of design, a recurring tree motif, and a generous deployment of idiosyncratic text written in his trademark miniature script.
The work celebrates the drama surrounding the excessive licence fees that the Colonial Government charged diggers, and the diggers' resistance to what they saw as authoritarian government, a drama that erupted in Ballarat at the Eureka Stockade on 3 December 1854.

Forty years later Meek repeated his 1852 *Police Camp* sketch, portraying the Eureka event from the viewpoint of the Camp Tree. He gave the tree a voice, and it laments its part in what Meek calls a travesty of British justice. He transformed the Camp Tree into a symbol of failed repression, 'emblematical of a tyrannical and oppressive government'.
[149 words]

Police Camp Ballarat 1852, pen and ink, Royal Historical Society of Victoria
This sketch and *The First House in Ballarat* are among the earliest known depictions of the Ballarat area.

Meek illustrated the tree's use as an agent of rough justice before a lockup was built to house lawbreakers — in particular, diggers caught without licences. Offenders were shackled to a bullock chain running around its base.

The original Police Camp was located at Golden Point, although the specific site is contested: it was possibly situated in the area now bounded by Peake, Young and Grant Streets, or at Post Office Hill on the corner of Bradshaw and Magpie Streets. Meek sketched the Camp in early 1852 before it was moved in July of that year to the area now known as Camp Street in the heart of present-day Ballarat.

Meek returned to this sketch forty years later and it reappears in *Ballarat's Historical Gum-Tree* as a metaphor for unjust government.
[148 words]

2. EAST WALL: PAST AND PRESENT OF BALLARAT
Rationale
This extended wall label was positioned by a donation box and was designed to make visitors aware of the dire condition of Meek's oeuvre. It made a plea for funds to conserve the original *Past and Present of Ballarat* on display.

The eleventh hour for Meek

Meek's oeuvre consists of works on paper that are now between 120 and 160 years old. They are fragile and many have been poorly stored. Even while research for this exhibition has been in progress, works have been crumbling and lost. The situation is dire*:* a body of singular works of art is at risk.

Of Meek's large charts, only two survive as original pen-and-ink works. The deterioration of this one is clear to see here — its condition is so fragile that it cannot be fully unrolled for display. To date, more than seventy works by Meek have been identified; these

include sketches, maps, illustrated charts, testimonials, genealogies, essays, memoirs, diaries, lectures and poems. Few copies remain and many are in terrible condition.

Meek's individuality, his intriguing career, his record of Ballarat, Victoria and New Zealand from early settlement to nationhood, and these extraordinary works give him a valuable place in colonial history, and in Australasia's graphic arts canon. Conservation work is critical so these works can live on for future generations to discover and explore.
[180 words]

Past and Present of Ballarat **(presentation original)** 1893 pen and ink, Gold Museum Ballarat
In 1893, *Past and Present of Ballarat* went on public display in this Gallery, but the Gallery Association was reluctant to buy it. Meek eventually donated it two years later. This display shows the letter of gift, along with his diary page for Easter Saturday 1895, when he called for his receipt.

The Gallery's reluctance to buy was partly financial, as the 1890s depression materially affected acquisitions, but it was also probably because Meek's work did not resemble anything in the collection — it would not have been seen as 'fine art'.

In the 1930s, the work was moved out of the collection with other items regarded as being more of historical interest. Its removal illustrates how graphic art has been valued and positioned. Some graphic arts, such as medieval manuscripts, for example, which also married words and images, were highly valued. However, contemporary graphics, such as this work by Meek, were associated with advertising and popular material and regarded with ambivalence.

Today, graphic arts are embraced in gallery collections, as this Gallery's recent acquisition of Meek's *Atlas of the Australasian Colonies* demonstrates.
[182 words]

Past and Present of Ballarat 1893 photolithograph, Gold Museum Ballarat
Meek made some big claims in this work about his own place in Ballarat's beginnings. He attributed a second Ballarat goldrush to his find on 1 January 1852, which he said prompted the return of diggers who had moved on to the Mount Alexander field. He asserted that his family were the first permanent residents, due to his building the first solid dwelling on the newly surveyed township, and titled himself 'Founder of the City'.

Meek's claims were overstated, but he was not alone in wanting to secure his place in the birth and building of a nation. The diggers were acutely aware of their role in this remarkable enterprise. It is not surprising that they wanted to memorialise their place in the heroic events that took place. So it is with Meek, whose works chronicle and celebrate a monumental tale of nationhood and democracy.
[146 words]

3. SOUTH WALL: MEEK and GRANT, the First House

Meek-Grant Didactic Panel

Rationale
This panel focussed on the connection between Meek and artist George Grant, on the theme of Meek's house in Ballarat. A chronological series of Meek's sketches and Grant's works in oil illustrated the unfolding story.

THE MEEK-GRANT CONNECTION

Today, most people who encounter Meek do so by way of a younger artist, George Grant (1865-1935). Ballarat-born Grant trained at the National Gallery School in Melbourne from 1888 to 1891. While a student, he was involved in the designs for Ballarat's statues of the poets Robbie Burns and Tom Moore.

Meek and Grant were both active in Victoria in the 1890s, had strong Ballarat connections, and were radical in their politics, but it is uncertain whether they ever met, and unclear why and how Meek's work was subsumed into Grant's.
In this group of works, the subject is Meek's own dwelling, which he claimed to be the first house in Ballarat. Meek drew his original pen-and-ink sketch 'on the spot in the

December of 1852'. He returned to this image over the years, and there are several versions of it on display.
Meek redrew the sketch in 1893 for an oil painting by Grant, commissioned by Thomas Bury, a Ballarat journalist and benefactor to Meek. The painting seems to have been commissioned partly out of nostalgia for the golden days of Ballarat's beginnings, partly in support of Meek's career, and for Bury's own personal prestige — he commissioned Grant to paint his own portrait in the same year.

In the two small coloured works, photographs of Meek's sketch have been overpainted in oil by Grant. Hand-colouring photographs was a popular Victorian technique which satisfied a desire for greater realism, and these coloured images of Ballarat's early days would have appealed to the Victorian public.

George Grant had a varied career. He was commissioned to paint a number of portraits, including one of Cardinal Manning for the Ballarat Trades Hall, and in the early twentieth century he painted trade union banners. Thereafter, in the challenging environment of the interwar years, he seems to have moved to practical employment as a detailer and decorator.
[315 words]

The First House in Ballarat 1852 pen and ink, Royal Historical Society of Victoria
John Sadleir arrived on the Ballarat diggings on 6 January 1853 as a police cadet. He stated that Meek's drawings 'are entirely true representations of things that existed when James Meek made his sketches.'[1]

Meek was proud of his house, the first solid premises on the newly established township, built near the corner of Lydiard and Dana Streets. In his later work, *Past and Present of Ballarat*, Meek described the dwelling in detail — slab and bark construction, 32 x 22 feet, six compartments, glass panel windows, and lined rooms. The land and building cost Meek £406.

Meek also had a factory 'for the making of ginger beer, lemonade, soda water and cordials' on site. These were not the only beverages Meek supplied to thirsty miners and

troopers — his establishment was known as *The Troopers' Arms* and Meek later recounted how he ran a sly grog shop there.[2]
Note: an incorrect date has been written on the sketch, not in Meek's hand.
[1]J Sadleir, 1913;
[2]*Warrnambool Examiner*, 1869
[161 words]

The First House in Ballarat n.d. pen and ink, Art Gallery of Ballarat
Meek drew many versions of his first house throughout his career and the date of this one is unknown. As Ballarat grew into a colonial city, there was great nostalgia for the early pioneering days and in this sketch Meek has added historical colour by portraying not only his dwelling and beverage factory, but also a group of troopers and an Aboriginal encampment. The figure of a woman standing outside the building is intriguing. It is tempting to wonder if she might be Julia Meek; if so, it would be a rare glimpse of Meek's partner of forty years.
[99 words]
George Grant after James McKain Meek, ***First House in Ballarat*** 1893 oil on canvas, Grant family collection
There is an element of mystery regarding how this work fits into the group of Meek-Grant works. It may have been a preparatory piece for a larger, more highly finished work that was commissioned by Thomas Bury in 1893. If this is the case, it would account for the sketch-like nature of the painting, compared with Grant's smaller oils.

However, it is doubtful that a young artist would have used valuable canvas for a preliminary piece. Moreover, the existence or whereabouts of a larger work is unknown. What this work does illustrate is Grant's engagement over time with Meek's work and with Ballarat's early days.
[104 words]

4. REVERSE TITLE WALL [central, freestanding wall, north side]

Atlas of the Australasian Colonies 1861 photolithograph, Art Gallery of Ballarat

Meek produced this *Atlas* early in his career and entered it in the Victorian Exhibition, Melbourne, in 1861 where he won a first prize. The following year it was awarded a gold medal at the International Exhibition in London. This success confirmed Meek's reputation as a graphic artist of note throughout the colonies. Astonishingly, in the same year, he also produced his *General Map of Australia*.

Meek toured widely in Australia, displaying the work, and seeking subscribers to underwrite the cost of printing it by photolithography. Here, the Victorian subscribers are listed in the lower section of the work.

'The design of the whole is ingenious and elaborate, and will reward a long and careful inspection. The penmanship is exquisite, and one cannot but admire the extraordinary patience displayed in its execution.'[1]

[1]*Argus*, 1861

[131 words]

General Map of Australia 1861 lithograph, University of Melbourne, Map Collection, Eve Library

Mapmaking was important to Meek and his nineteenth-century contemporaries. As well as having vital practical value, maps were a potent symbol of conquest, triumph and glory — for the men who made them, and for the empire whose voracious appetite for expansion they served.

Meek's map works on both levels. It celebrates the sheer size of the continent and the extent of exploration, settlement, and transport infrastructure achieved by 1861. It shows the routes of the explorers, conjuring up names and deeds that were creating the legends of a burgeoning new nation.

The map was described as accurate and 'complete to every letter and figure, being worked out with a beauty of precision almost inconceivable.'[1] Another newspaper noted that 'Mr Landsborough's route was drawn on the original by himself, and may therefore be relied upon as correct.'[2]

Meek was well-known in Victoria as an explorer and mapmaker from his earliest days, but a house fire in 1866 destroyed much of his original material.

[1]*Empire,* 1863

[2]*Sydney Morning Herald,* 1863

[162 words]

5. NORTH WALL: HISTORY TREES and NEW ZEALAND WORKS

Didactic Panel on lithography

Rationale

This printing technique is at the heart of Meek's oeuvre and the panel was designed to answer two visitor questions as simply as possible: How were these works made? What is lithography?

WRITTEN IN STONE

'… saw my writing on the stone, the photographic work has been exceedingly well done and the copies from which will no doubt be *par excellence*, excelling anything of the kind produced by the same process in any part of the world.'[1]

The lithographic process, invented in 1798, opened up possibilities for artists, advertisers, cartographers and others to communicate to a wide audience.

Lithography literally means 'writing on stone,' and relies on the chemical principle of the mutual repulsion of oil and water. An image is drawn with greasy ink on a finely polished limestone block, which is then wetted, and ink is rolled onto it. The porous stone holds water and therefore repels the greasy ink, while the image itself, being greasy, accepts additional ink. Printing paper is placed over the inked stone and put through a press, producing the printed image.

The image printed from the stone is necessarily a mirror image. However, if the artist draws the image onto transfer paper instead of directly onto the stone, once the transfer paper is pressed onto the stone, it is a reversed image that appears. The print then taken from the stone appears as the artist drew it.

Photography impacted the work of artists and printers, and in 1859, John Osborne, of the Magnetic Survey Department in Melbourne, made ground-breaking improvements in the photolithographic process that transformed the Australasian printing industry. Meek embraced this new technology — his works were photographed, and the chemically prepared negative was imprinted by steam pressure directly onto the lithographic stone. Meek's body of work would not have been possible without the printers of the day. These artisans, men of skill and talent, included Rider & Mercer, James Curtis, and Francis Niven in Ballarat.

[1]JM Meek diary, 1893

[292 words]

Chronological Tree of Victorian History 1873 photolithograph, Museum Victoria [and diary page]

Meek described how he came to draw the tree of Victorian history.

'I was a resident of the town of Warrnambool in which place I wrote the History of Victoria in the form of a gum-tree in tablet form. The blossoms of the tree denoted the towns. The foliage occupied the space of the map of Victoria. The branches gave the geological features of the country, and the barrel its history, arranged in chronological order. Such an undertaking was a very trying one to accomplish, the drawing being 6 feet by 5 feet, however, in due time I completed my task. In the intermittent time to relieve the monotony, I composed my epic poem 'The Creation', and when finished, I lent it to my friends for their perusal, all admired the sentiment and advised me to get it published, which I did.'[1]

Four years later, in New Zealand with his family, Meek repeated his idea of the history tree, this time using a kauri as the centrepiece for his new audience.

[1]JM Meek, original MS

[171 words]

Chronological Tree of New Zealand History 1877 photolithograph, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, NZ
The original pen-and-ink drawing of this chart is awe-inspiring. Its massive size — 2.25m x 1.5m — combined with the exquisite detail and the miniature text, is quite breathtaking. The version of the work shown here is a photolithograph that was made in a reduced size for sale.

This is Meek's masterwork, completed within three years of his arrival in New Zealand. He left Victoria in 1874 with an established reputation as a graphic artist of note and at the height of his competency, so it is not surprising that he created this work on a grand scale in order to establish himself in a new colony.

Meek's two history trees, of Victoria (1873) and of New Zealand (1877), are essentially the same in concept. The tree motif forms the central design element, on and around which Meek packs a vast array of information, designed to celebrate and promote colonial progress. The New Zealand work is undoubtedly the more ambitious in size and scope.
[162 words]

Christchurch City 1882 lithograph, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, NZ
Meek's earliest known work was a chart celebrating Warrnambool and its district that was reviewed in the local press in 1856. It was a small, illustrated piece, measuring 3 feet by 2 feet, praising the area's development and giving its history and statistics.[1] *Christchurch City*, although twenty-five years later, is essentially the same in conception and execution, but on a larger scale.

Meek held fast to his own vision, and worked with his particular skills, throughout his career as a graphic artist, which spanned half a century. He was admired in his day, but as the nineteenth century drew to a close, taste was changing. It seems that his public were ambivalent: they admired his skill and sentiment, and valued his representation of their epoch, but his work became perhaps more a curiosity of a passing age than a vibrant rendering of a new era in the making.
[1]*Warrnambool Examiner*, 1856
[149 words]

Beauties of Shakspeare [sic] 1883 lithograph, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, NZ
As a graphic artist attempting to make a living by his pen, Meek had an eye to popular taste.

He produced two works honouring the Bard. In this 1882 version, he presented the titles of the plays, well-known soliloquies and quotations, set in a series of hanging banners.

'Mr Meek intends to exhibit this specimen of his skill at the forthcoming Exhibition, together with another, having reference more specially to Christchurch.'[1]

Following the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, exhibitions were held all over the globe and patronised enthusiastically by the public. They provided an opportunity to promote a city, region, or country, and showcased everything from agriculture and resources to manufacturing and fine art. The 1882 New Zealand International Exhibition at Hagley Park in Christchurch ran for fourteen weeks and attracted crowds of 226,000. Many of the art works were sold to local collectors.
[1]*Star*, 1882
[145 words]

6. WEST WALL: GENEALOGIES and RELIGIOUS WORK

Didactic Panel on the Meek family

Rationale

There were several men of the same name working in Ballarat and Victoria contemporaneously with Meek. This had caused some confusion; in particular, a photographer in Daylesford had been mistaken for Meek and his work incorrectly attributed. This panel was designed to clear the confusion. It was placed alongside a photograph of Meek.

MEEK BY NAME

There were many Meek families in colonial Australia, including some with the recurring name 'James', who are unrelated to the subject of this exhibition, causing problems in researching his biography.

In particular, there was a photographer, James Meek, working in Victoria in the 1870s, whose father James lived in Ballarat, and whose son James lived in Clunes — this family is not related. There were other unrelated Meeks, including early arrivals in New South Wales, and in Ballarat, Gisborne, Geelong and Lake Bolac from the 1850s.

James McKain Archibald Job Meek (1815–1899) was the son of Job Meek and Marianne McKain. He was born in Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, a major fishing port at the time, in Norfolk, England. He arrived in Sydney in January 1838, married Julia Ann Craig (1816–84), also from England, in 1843, and moved to the Port Phillip District (Victoria) in about 1846.

James and Julia Meek had four children:

John Thomas, born Sydney 1844, died New Zealand 1929;
Marianne Elizabeth (Dallimore), born Sydney 1846, died Warrnambool 1934;
Octavia Ann (Frenz), born Geelong 1849, died Adelaide 1930; and
Henry Leslie Rothes, born Geelong 1851, died c.1915–20, probably United States of America.

Meek spent several years in New Zealand 1874–90 with all his family except Marianne, who lived in Warrnambool throughout her life.
All four children survived, married, and had families of their own. Their descendants were to spread throughout Australia, New Zealand and America.
[243 words]

The Christian's Keepsake 1880 lithograph, Auckland War Memorial Museum, NZ
'The design and work are wonderful from a conceptive and artistic view — while the theme is worked out into as complete an allegorical sermon as is possible to conceive.'[1]

This work is a good example of Meek's eccentric juxtaposition of elements. He combines kauri trees, kangaroos and classical pillars, and places a floating figure of Christ between two gum trees, above exotic Eastern architecture and Australian bush land, all topped by a single eye in an inverted triangle, an image that derives from Freemasonry. Meek's use of Masonic symbolism is not an accurate rendering. Rather, he seems to draw on this style

of iconography as an artistic source. The same elements are used in the *Beauties of Shakspeare*. No evidence has emerged that Meek was a Mason.
[1]*Evening Post*, 1893
[127 words]

The Christian's Keepsake 1973 reproduction, Art Gallery of Ballarat
Meek drew two versions of this religious work, in 1880 and in 1893. The difference between the two is minimal — the figure of Christ in the central oval is more finely delineated in the later work, but text and design are unchanged.
Meek descendant John Dallimore reported that a lithograph of the later work 'was located by an Anglican priest in 1973 on a visit to a parishioner. He had this reproduced and copies were sold as a fundraiser … for post-graduate training of Pacific Islanders.' Dallimore commented that Meek would have been delighted to know that a charity was finally benefitting from his work.[1]
[1]JT Dallimore
[105 words]

Fidler Cockman Family Register 1865 lithograph with pen and ink, Warrnambool and District Historical Society
While Meek undertook commissions and created large charts, he relied for cash flow on popular, low-cost items. A decorative template for recording family trees was a favourite, and 'there are few homes in the Western District that have not amongst their household treasures some specimen of the old caligraphist's [sic] artistic work'.[1] They were also well received in New Zealand. His Family Register was reviewed not long after his arrival: 'we believe there will be many a souvenir from his pen in Auckland.'[2]
As well as family registers, Meek also produced birth souvenirs, wedding souvenirs, and *memento mori*. He would sell his customers a blank template and complete the details as supplied, leaving space for the family to add new events.

However, some of his family genealogies were far more elaborate works celebrating eminent families, such as the Matson Manifold commission.
[1]*Table Talk*, 1899
[2]*Auckland Star,* 1875
[140 words]

Matson Manifold Genealogical Tree of Family History c.1880 lithograph, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, NZ

Meek attracted some substantial commissions during his time in New Zealand. The *Matson Manifold* work is an arresting image, a proud and engaging family tree, the majesty of its central kauri proclaiming that this family regarded itself as no insignificant dynasty.

It is a family record of individual design, more elaborate than the mass-produced template for popular consumption used in the *Fidler Cockman* and *Skilbeck Midgley Family Registers*.

It was 'dedicated to Peter Manifold Esquire of Purrumbete Station Camperdown Victoria by his affectionate nephew John Thomas Matson of Springfield Christchurch New Zealand.' Meek was resident in Christchurch at the time of this commission, but he had spent a good deal of his life in the Western District of Victoria, so this family's connections between Christchurch and Camperdown would have had a special resonance for him.

[135 words]

The Creation: An Epic Poem 1898 printed pamphlet, private collection

As with many of Meek's works, his poem *The Creation* has two versions. Originally written in 1874 while he was working on the *Chronological Tree of Victorian History*, it was re-cast twenty-four years later. This copy is the later edition that Meek set as a cantata. He tried to have an original score composed for the work but eventually decided that it could be sung to the music of Haydn's *The Creation*.

Meek had high hopes of the work producing good revenue that he intended to donate to the Ballarat Benevolent Asylum, a home for the poor, where he had lived since 1892. The musical event did not come to pass, and sales of the epic poem were disappointing. Meek's timing could not have been worse — the 1890s depression was severe, fortunes were being lost, and there was little money for non-essentials.

[142 words]

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